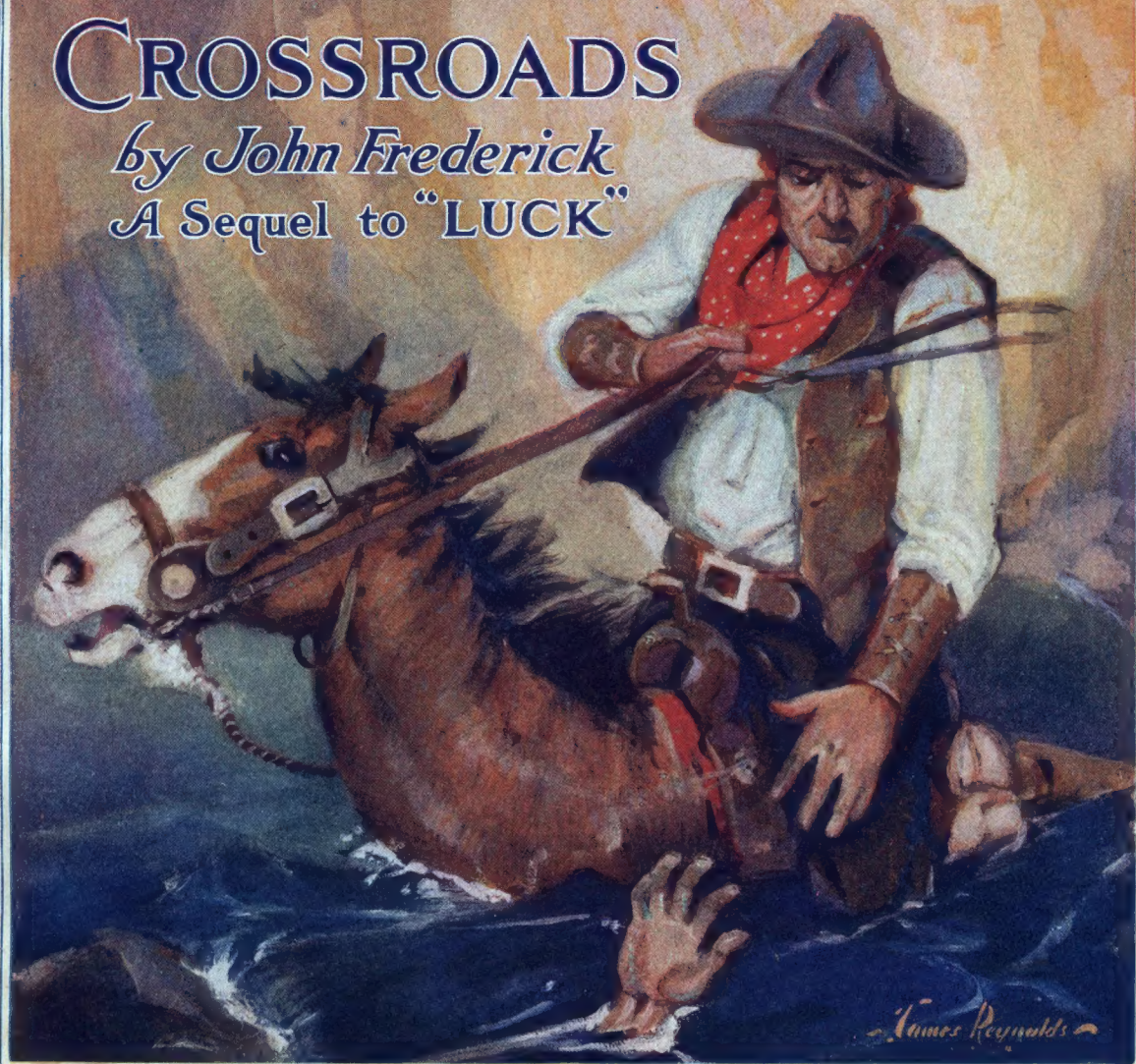


ARGOSY

Issued Weekly

CROSSROADS

by John Frederick
A Sequel to "LUCK"



10¢
A COPY

JANUARY 31

\$4.00
A YEAR

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Men's High Cut Shoe

\$100

Down

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ChromeTanSolidLeatherThroughout

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pliable
high-
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chrome
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leather*

*Real, Honest
Leather
Throughout*

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Dept. 9071 W. 35th St., Chicago



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Adjusted to the Second - Adjusted to Temperature - Adjusted to Isochronism - Adjusted to Positions
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Name.....

Address.....

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXVII

ISSUED WEEKLY

NUMBER 2

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J. Allan Dunn at His Best!

"A MAN TO HIS MATE"

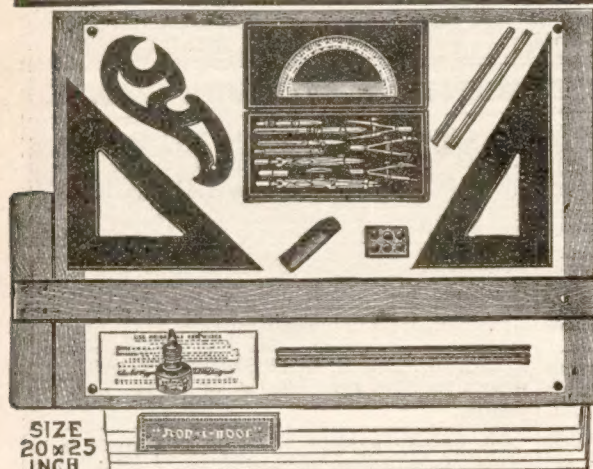
BEGINS NEXT WEEK

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
FRANK A. MUNSEY, President RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer
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Complete Set of Drawing Instruments and Drawing Table

Yes, I will give you this complete drawing outfit absolutely free. The instruments are in a handsome high class, plush lined folding case. They are regular draftsman's working instruments. Besides I will give you absolutely free, a 20 x 25 inch drawing board, a 24 inch T square, a 12 inch rule, a supply of drawing paper, two triangles, a French curve, pencils, erasers, thumb tacks, etc.

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Chief Draftsman Dobe
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Name.....

Address.....



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$3.25
THE ARGOSY COME'N		Less 2% cash discount
The Argosy	1.75	
All-Story Weekly		

Feb. 28th Argosy Combination Forms Close Feb. 4th.

"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the Classified Department of the Munsey Magazines. Mailed anywhere on request.

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RAINCOAT AGENTS. I'll pay you \$12 daily taking orders for Reversible Raincoats. Two coats in one. One side rich, tan dress coat, other side storm overcoat. Something brand new. Not sold in stores. Also other styles. Dozens of fabrics for men, women, children. Popular prices. Newest styles. Guaranteed waterproof or money back. We manufacture and make to measure. Shortage of raincoats and high cost of overcoats make sales easy! Elaborate outfit and sample coat to workers. Parker Mfg. Co., 506 Rue Street, Dayton, Ohio.

\$65.00 A WEEK AND YOUR SUIT FREE — If you take advantage of our startling offer. Write us at once, and we will send you a full line of samples and everything necessary to start at once, absolutely free, postage prepaid. Spencer Mead Company, Dept. 1193, Chicago.

AGENTS: SELL NEVERFAIL IRON RUST AND STAIN REMOVER. HUGE PROFITS. BIG LINE. SAMPLE. Write today. Sanford-Beal Co., Inc., Newark, N. Y., Dept. A.

SELL What Millions Want. New, wonderful Liberty Portraits. Creates tremendous interest. Absolutely different; unique; enormous demand—30 hours' service. Liberal credit. Outfit and catalogue free. \$100 weekly profit easy. Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 22, 1036 W. Adams Street, Chicago.

MIRACLE MOTOR-GAS amazes motorists. 3c worth equals gallon gasoline. Eliminates carbon. 300% profit. Isom, Idaho, wires: "Ship 500 packages. Made \$70 yesterday." Investigate. Chas. H. Butler Co., Dept. 197, Toledo, Ohio.

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Mexican Diamonds Flash Like Genuine, fool experts, stand tests, yet sell for 1-50th the price. Few live agents wanted to sell from handsome sample case. Big profits, pleasant work. Write today. Mexican Diamond Imp'tg. Co., Box 88, Las Cruces, N. Mexico.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Drawer 93, East Orange, N.J.

\$10 DAILY: GOLD WINDOW LETTERS; SAMPLE FREE. Write to-day. Detroit Sign Letter Company, Dept. A, 1043 Gratiot Avenue, Detroit, Mich.

SALES AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY TO GIVE ALL OR SPARE TIME. Position worth \$750 to \$1500 yearly. We train the inexperienced. Novelty Cutlery Co., 77 Bar Street, Canton, Ohio.

YOUNG MAN, WOULD YOU ACCEPT A TAILOR-MADE SUIT just for showing it to your friends? Then write Banner Tailoring Co., Dept. 400, Chicago, and get beautiful samples, styles and a wonderful offer.

AGENTS: \$100 weekly possible introducing new winter automobile fuel. Specially adapted to cold weather. Starts easy. Adds power, mileage and reduces operating expense. Endorsed by thousands. Territory going like wildfire. Act quick. \$28 sample outfit free. L. Ballwey, Dept. 57, Louisville, Ky.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

LAND! LAND! BIG MONEY IN GRAINS, livestock, fruit, poultry, Michigan's best hardwood land. Only \$15 to \$35 per acre. Easy terms. Markets, schools, churches. Free insurance. Farm advisers. No swamps or stones. 10 to 160 acres. Best land offer in United States from largest company. Booklet free. Write today. Swigart Land Company, 11245 First National Bank Building, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

LIVE WIRE AGENTS! WE WANT YOU! Take orders for The Liberty Line of Made-to-Measure combination Top-Coats, Raincoats and Automobile Coats. Hundreds of orders waiting for you. Our stock of materials is tremendous and deliveries are prompt. Complete selling outfit and sample coat free. Biggest commissions paid. We deliver and collect. Join our sales force of the biggest money-makers by writing for particulars at once. The Liberty Raincoat Company, Dept. A-3, Dayton, Ohio.

SALESMEN—Slide or main line, to sell low-priced, 5,000-mile guaranteed tires; 30x3½ non-skid sells for \$11.95; other sizes in proportion. Good money-making proposition for live wires. Write Consolidated Tire Co., 1777 Broadway, New York City.

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MR. GALLAHER MADE \$336.00 IN ONE WEEK selling Guaranteed Collection Cabinets, used by all business men. Write to-day. Sayers Mfg. Co., 2875 Sheffield Ave., Chicago, Ill.

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AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER. Get our Free Sample Case Offer. Ho-Ro-Co, 137 Locust, St. Louis, Mo.

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AGENTS—\$40 TO \$100 A WEEK. Free Samples. Gold and silver Sign Letters for stores and office windows. Anyone can put them on. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431-H, N. Clark, Chicago.

AGENTS—YOUR OWN CLOTHES FREE and \$60.00 a week. Start in your spare time. Tailoring business simply great this year. Write American Woolen Mills Company, Dept. 1433, Chicago, for cloth samples of 60 big sensational sellers.

WE PAY \$100 MONTHLY SALARY AND FURNISH RIG AND EXPENSES to introduce guaranteed poultry and stock Powders. Bigler Company, X-596, Springfield, Illinois.

DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN to sell your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 5,000,000 readers of The Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 B'way, N. Y.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED FOR PUBLICATION. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

WRITERS: HAVE YOU A POEM, STORY OR PHOTOPLAY TO SELL? Submit MSS. at once to Music Sales Company, Dept. 60, St. Louis, Mo.

FREE TO WRITERS—a wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

WANTED—STORIES, ARTICLES, POEMS for New Magazine. We pay on acceptance. Typed or handwritten MSS. acceptable. Send MSS. to Woman's National Magazine, Desk 139, Washington, D. C.

Classified Advertising continued on page 3, back section.

Repair Any Auto or Auto Truck

Examine These NEW AUTO BOOKS FREE

Be an expert auto repair man. You can have the skill that makes every complicated trouble as easy to fix as taking out a spark plug. Learn every detail of all makes of cars and trucks. Know exactly how to find what's wrong and how to make all repairs quickly. These great new Auto Books show you how.

Make Money Repairing Autos

The limited output of new cars does not anywhere near meet the demand. Rebuilt cars are selling at a premium. Never before have expert auto repair men been in such great demand and made so much money.

Now is your great money-earning opportunity in the auto repair business. Every mechanic, every chauffeur, every car owner needs this great New Library of Automobile Engineering.

Tells About

Explosion Motors, Welding, Motor Construction and Repair, Carburetors and Settings, Valves, Cooling, Lubrication, Fly-Wheels, Clutch, Transmission, Final Drive, Steering Frames, Tires, Vulcanizing, Ignition, Starting and Lighting Systems, Shop Kinks, Public Garage Design, Equipment and Operation, Electric, Storage Batteries—Care and Repair, Steam Cars, Motorcycles Commercial Trucks, Glossary. More than 100 blue-prints of wiring diagrams.

50c a Week If You Decide to Buy

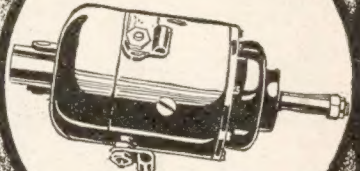
Let us send you the complete six volume set of Automobile Engineering for one week's examination. Read the simple directions for repairing every automobile trouble. Six thick volumes, 5½ x 8½ inches, flexibly bound in American morocco. 2,650 pages, 2,100 illustrations, wiring diagrams, etc. Everything in plain, every-day language, simple to understand. If you decide to keep them, send only \$2 in seven days, and \$2 a month thereafter until the special introductory price of \$19.80 has been paid. The regular price is \$30.00, so you save \$10.20 by acting at once.

Send No Money

Don't send a penny! Your name and address in the coupon brings the six books to you at once for seven days' trial. With each set we give you absolutely free a \$12 Consulting Membership, entitling you to ask our staff of automobile experts as many questions as you wish a whole year free.

Mail Coupon NOW

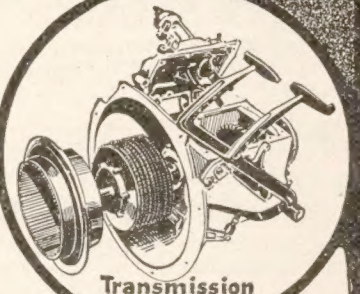
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Dept. AD-161, CHICAGO, U. S. A.



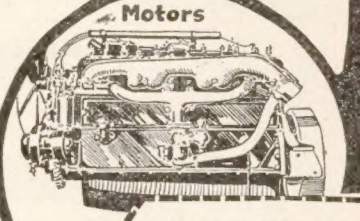
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Transmission



Motors

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SOCIETY

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Please send me the six-volume set of Automobile Engineering for seven days' examination, shipping charges collect. If I decide to buy I will send \$2.00 within seven days and balance at \$2.00 a month until \$19.80 has been paid. Then you will send me a receipt showing that the set of books and the Consulting Membership are mine and fully paid for. If I think I can get along without the books, I will return them, after 7 days, at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

Reference.....





Free Proof that I Can Raise Your Pay

No matter how much you are earning now, I can show you how to increase it. I have even taken failures and shown them how to make \$100—\$200, and in one case as high as \$2,000 weekly. I am willing to prove this entirely at my risk and expense.

LET'S have a little chat about getting ahead—you and I. My name is Pelton. Lots of people call me "The Man Who Makes Men Rich." I don't deny it. I've done it for thousands of people—lifted them up from poverty to riches.

I'm no genius—far from it. I'm just a plain, everyday, unassuming sort of man. I know what poverty is. I've looked black despair in the eye—had failure stalk me around and hoodoo everything I did. I've known the bitterest kind of want.

But to-day all is different. I have money and all of the things that money will buy. I am rich also in the things that money won't buy—health, happiness and friendship. Few people have more of the blessings of the world than I.

It was a simple thing that jumped me up from poverty to riches. As I've said, I'm no genius. But I had the good fortune to know a genius. One day this man told me a "secret." It had to do with getting ahead and growing rich. He had used it himself with remarkable results. He said that every wealthy man knew this "secret,"—that is why he was rich.

I used the "secret." It surely had a good test. At that time I was flat broke. Worse

than that, for I was several thousand dollars in the hole. I had about given up hope when I put the "secret" to work.

At first I couldn't believe my sudden change in fortune. Money actually flowed in on me. I was thrilled with a new sense of power. Things I couldn't do before became as easy for me to do as opening a door. My business boomed and continued to leap ahead at a rate that startled me. Prosperity became my partner. Since that day I've never known what it is to want for money, friendship, happiness, health or any of the good things of life.

That "secret" surely made me rich in every sense of the word.

My sudden rise to riches naturally surprised others. One by one people came to me and asked me how I did it. I told them. And it worked for them as well as it did for me.

Some of the things this "secret" has done for people are astounding. I would hardly believe them if I hadn't seen them with my own eyes. Adding ten, twenty, thirty or forty dollars a week to a man's income is a mere nothing. That's merely playing at it. In one case I took a rank failure and in a few weeks had him earning as high as \$2,000.00 a week. Listen to this:

A young man in the East had an article for which there was a nation-wide demand. For twelve years he "puttered around" with

it, barely eking out a living. To-day this young man is worth \$200,000. He is building a \$25,000 home—and paying cash for it. He has three automobiles. His children go to private schools. He goes hunting, fishing, traveling, whenever the mood strikes him. His income is over a thousand dollars a week.

In a little town in New York lives a man who two years ago was pitied by all who knew him. From the time he was 14 he had worked and slaved—and at sixty he was looked upon as a failure. Without work—in debt to his charitable friends, with an invalid son to support, the outlook was pitchy black.

Then he learned the "secret." In two weeks he was in business for himself. In three months his plant was working night and day to fill orders. During 1916 the profits were \$20,000. During 1917 the profits ran close to \$40,000. And this genial 64-year young man is enjoying pleasures and comforts he little dreamed would ever be his.

I could tell you thousands of similar instances. But there's no need to do this as I'm willing to tell you the "secret" itself. Then you can put it to work and see what it will do for you.

I don't claim I can make you rich over night. Maybe I can—maybe I can't. Sometimes I have failures—everyone has. But I do claim that I can help 90 out of every 100 people if they will let me.

The point of it all, my friend, is that you are using only about one-tenth of that wonderful brain of yours. That's why you haven't won greater success. Throw the unused nine-tenths of your brain into action and you'll be amazed at the almost instantaneous results.

The Will is the motive power of the brain. Without a highly trained, inflexible will, a man has about as much chance of attaining success in life as a railway engine has of crossing the continent without steam. The biggest ideas have no value without will-power to "put them over." Yet the will, altho heretofore entirely neglected, can be trained into wonderful power like the brain or memory and by the very same method—intelligent exercise and use.

If you held your arm in a sling for two years, it would become powerless to lift a feather, from lack of use. The same is true of the Will—it becomes useless from lack of practice. Because we don't use our Wills—because we continually bow to circumstance—we become unable to assert ourselves. What our wills need is practice.

Develop your will-power and money will flow in on you. Rich opportunities will open up for you. Driving energy

you never dreamed you had will manifest itself. You will thrill with a new power—a power that nothing can resist. You'll have an influence over people that you never thought possible. Success—in whatever form you want it—will come as easy as failure came before. And those are only a few of the things the "secret" will do for you. The "secret" is fully explained in the wonderful book, "Power of Will."

How You Can Prove This at My Expense

I know you'll think that I've claimed a lot. Perhaps you think there must be a catch somewhere. But here is my offer. You can easily make thousands—you can't lose a penny.

Send no money—no, not a cent. Merely clip the coupon and mail it to me. By return mail you'll receive not a pamphlet, but the whole "secret" told in this wonderful book "POWER OF WILL."

Keep it five days. Look it over in your home. Apply some of its simple teachings. If it doesn't show you how you can increase your income many times over—just as it has for thousands of others—mail the book back. You will be out nothing.

But if you do feel that "POWER OF WILL" will do for you what it

has done for over a quarter of a million others—if you feel as they do that it's the next greatest book to the Bible—send me only \$3.50 and you and I'll be square.

If you pass this offer by, I'll be out only the small profit on a three-and-a-half-dollar sale. But you—you may easily be out the difference between what you're making now and an income several times as great. So you see you've a lot—a whole lot—more to lose than I.

Mail the coupon or write a letter now—you may never read this offer again.

PELTON PUBLISHING COMPANY

54 A Wilcox Block, MERIDEN, CONN.

PELTON PUBLISHING COMPANY

54 A Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn.

You may send me "Power of Will" at your risk. I agree to remit \$3.50 or remail the book to you in five days.

Name.....

Address.....

A Few Examples

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Among over 350,000 users of "Power of Will" are such men as Judge Ben B. Lindsey; Supreme Court Justice Parker; Wu Ting Fang, Ex U. S. Chinese Ambassador; Assistant Postmaster-General Britt; Gov. McKelvie of Nebraska; General Manager Christeson of Wells-Fargo Express Co.; E. St. Elmo Lewis, former Vice-Pres. Art Metal Construction, Co.; Gov. Ferris of Michigan, and many others of equal prominence.

\$300 PROFIT FROM ONE DAY'S READING

"The result from one day's study netted me \$300 cash. I think it a great book and would not be without it for ten times the cost."—A. W. Wilke, Faulkton, So. Dakota.

WORTH \$15,000 AND MORE

"The book has been worth more than \$15,000 to me."—Oscar B. Sheppard, 1417 E. Locust St., Decatur, Ill.

WOULD BE WORTH \$100,000

"If I had only had it when I was 20 years old, I would be worth \$100,000 to-day. It is worth a hundred times the price."—S. W. Taylor, The Santa Fe Ry., Milans, Tex.

SALARY JUMPED FROM \$150 TO \$800

"Since I read 'Power of Will' my salary has jumped from \$150 to \$800 a month."—J. F. Gibson, San Diego, Cal.

FROM \$100 TO \$3,000 A MONTH

"One of our boys who read 'Power of Will' before he came over here jumped from \$100 a month to \$3,000 the first month, and won a \$250 prize for the best salesmanship in the state."—Private Leslie A. Still, A. E. F., France.

How to Save \$10 on Your Next Suit

An Amazing Offer!

\$20 for a Real \$30 Tailored-to-Measure Suit is an example of the savings you make in buying your clothes on our economical plan. You don't have to pay a prohibitive price for your suit. No matter what style or what grade you select—\$20, \$25, \$35 and up—we can show you how to save at least \$10—never less, often more. It is true that the wool shortage, high labor costs, the heavy demand and limited supply have made clothing prices higher than ever before. But our direct plan brings your suit to you at practically wholesale cost. We have no agents, no salesmen, no dealers. The great overhead expense of middlemen is all cut out of the price you pay. Our enormous business, buying and selling for cash, makes every penny go for real quality. There is no waste.

Our Special No-Risk Offer

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. CXVII

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 1920

No. 2



Crossroads

A SEQUEL TO "LUCK"

by John Frederick

Author of "Luck," "The Hammer," etc.

CHAPTER I.

DESTINATION—THE WORLD.

"**H**OW much hell *can* this fellow raise?" inquired a stranger in Guadalupe, after being regaled at some length by a tale of the manifold exploits of Dix Van Dyck.

And the answer was: "Partner, how much hell *is* there?"

Yet many held that there was nothing malicious about Dix Van Dyck. It was simply the spirit of what had been mischief in his boyhood. Now that he had passed the period of fisticuffs and entered that of six-guns, his pranks had serious consequences quite frequently, but his heart had not changed a whit.

Formerly a fist fight satisfied all the yearnings of his hungry soul, but now that he stood something over six feet and weighed in the neighborhood of two hundred pounds of hard, fighting, lean-drawn muscle, an encounter with the brown fists of Dix Van Dyck was hardly perferable to a gun fight.

In another environment Dix unquestionably might have led a harmless and, in time, useful existence, but unfortunately he was born in the Land of Little Rain and Many Greasers.

The latter are framed by the deity to irritate white men and tempt them to deeds of violence. Dix being of a temperament which required little tempting, the results were highly disastrous. Other men in the Southwest have taken their little outings, and no one thinks the less of them because they placed the period at the end of the lives of a few greasers.

Dix, however, lived in a State where some eighty per cent. of the population is Mexican, where the laws of the Legislature are printed in Spanish first and afterward in Mexican, and where a greaser considers himself of a strata a few degrees above that of any white man.

The term "white man" is used advisedly, because it must be known that the Mexican is over eighty per cent. pure Indian in blood. He is not the half-Spanish product which most people imagine.

Take an Apache Indian, water his blood with a mixture of negro, Spanish, and English, and the resultant will be a fairly close representation of the Mexican—that is, if your imagination does not explode before you have completed your compound.

It goes without argument that in such an environment Dix Van Dyck found a plentiful field for mischief, and he harvested his crop of deviltry with the most painful hus-

bandry. Yet he escaped unpunished for many years, even in a land where every jury was three-quarters Mexican.

The reason was that there was in Dix Van Dyck an appealing element suggestive of the big boy run wild, and men found it hard to judge him sternly—even Mexican men. Also it was known to all men that Dix was not the sort to hunt his six-gun by preference. He was perfectly contented to rely upon those bone-hard fists of his until the other fellow—probably from a strategic position behind a chair or from a corner of the floor—drew his gun. Then it was all over except the coroner's verdict. That verdict was usually "suicide."

And afterward there followed a period of anguish for Dix Van Dyck. For he did not like killings and he swore off on gun-plays as religiously as a confirmed drunkard; but always the excitement of a prospective fight was too much for him, and the undertaker received another order.

Which would make it appear that Dix was a public nuisance. Yet men liked him. A man who fights squarely is judged most leniently in the Southwest. Moreover, the boyishly eager, almost wistful smile of Dix would have disarmed a heart of steel.

If he had confined his attentions to white men of ill repute and Mexicans of the lower orders all would have been well, but in an evil moment Dix crossed the path of a certain Mexican-American politician, one Señor Don Porfirio Maria Onate. In the newspapers he was known as Mr. Onate, but in private life every one used the title he preferred.

The worthy Señor Onate was running for the office of sheriff of Chaparna County, and approached Dix Van Dyck in a public place with a request for his vote. This was a rash step, and would never have been undertaken by the noble don if he had not been too warmly inspired by tequila, which is apt to make the courage greater than the judgment.

The reply of Dix Van Dyck was of Homeric temper and volume. He stated his opinion of Señor Don Porfirio Maria Onate in full, and completed his survey of the don's public career with some terse remarks about his ancestors.

Any other man in the Southwest might have been tempted to fight, but even tequila was not as potent in the soul of Mr. Onate as the fear of Dix Van Dyck. It is manifestly impossible for a full-blooded Indian to turn white, but Señor Onate changed to a singularly unpleasant yellow-green. He stroked his mustachios and smiled and hated Dix Van Dyck with his little, bright eyes; but he said nothing.

Afterward he sent his brother, accompanied by two accomplished greaser cut-throats, to settle the long account with Dix Van Dyck. They came upon him from the rear when he was unarmed, and there followed a battle which still lives in the memory of the inhabitants of Chaparna County.

Dix Van Dyck tore a shelf from the wall and with it brained two of his assailants. Then he strangled the third with his bare hands. Afterward he called upon Señor Onate, but that gentleman was not at home, another proof of wisdom.

Three days later Señor Onate was elected sheriff of Chaparna County, and Dix Van Dyck kissed his mother good-by, hugged his little brother, and departed, for regions unknown, to the north.

This might seem strange to some, for the last crime of Dix had been most manifest self-defense, but the dwellers in Chaparna County understood. It would have been impossible to get a jury which was not under the thumb of the new sheriff. It would have been a mockery, not a trial. So Dix Van Dyck mounted on a great horse, strong enough to bear even his weight on a day's ride, and disappeared into the hills.

He was not ill pleased by the thought of leaving Chaparna County, even under compulsion. Like the young Alexander, he was anxious for new worlds to conquer, and once started along the outward path he wondered why he had not made the move before. His mind was at peace; self-content warmed his blood.

In the long holster his Winchester jostled softly. At either hip was the comfortable weight of a six-gun. The sweat of the tall horse was like incense in his nostrils, and the creaking of the saddle leather was sweeter than music to his ears. Behind his saddle a blanket was rolled in the slicker,

and in the saddle-bags he carried enough provision for many a day.

The Arab seizes a handful of dates and another of barley, and is ready for the desert. The Southwesterner travels almost as light. For guide Dix Van Dyck carried an instinct sure as that of a hunting coyote or a migratory bird. His destination was—the world.

CHAPTER II.

DOUBLE BEND.

HE did not leave Guadalupe an hour too soon, for the new sheriff was hardly in office before a warrant for Dix Van Dyck appeared. A posse strove to serve it, and rode hard to the north, only to find that their bird had flown into distant regions. They returned with the ill news, and Sheriff Onate sat down to bide his time, for the Mexican has in fact, what the elephant is endowed with in fancy—a memory which never dies.

As for Dix Van Dyck, he cared not a whit what was happening behind him. He had no sooner turned his shoulder upon yesterday than it was lost and abandoned with the shades of distant years. His heart went galloping into the future.

So it was, in the early evening, that he swung into sight of Double Bend, a group of 'dobe huts and frame shacks huddling away into the purples which swung down from the shadowy mountains beyond.

Double Bend took its name from the windings of Coyote Creek, which flowed through its center. The main street followed the windings of that treacherous little stream, and men held that the inhabitants of Double Bend were as snakelike as the street they walked.

All of this was unknown to Dix Van Dyck, for he had long since left far behind him the regions which he knew and where he was known. All that he saw in Double Bend as he passed down its sinuous main street looked very good to him. It gave the impression of a town which has been much lived in.

The window-panes, for instance, were usually shattered; the wooden Indian which

the proprietor of the general merchandise store had erected before his place of business was minus one arm, and his legs had almost been shot away. From a saloon of capacious proportions strains of music and the roll of voices proclaimed that "a good time was being had by all."

So Dix Van Dyck hurriedly put up his horse in the stables, ate in the restaurant a great platter of ham and eggs, with an enormous side dish of French-fried potatoes, and then bore toward the saloon and dance-hall.

The gasoline lamp flaring over its entrance was like the vortex of a whirlpool toward which all living things from many miles around gravitated with irresistible force. Buckboards littered one side of the street, and horses the other, and under the glare of the lamp a continual stream of men passed toward the dance-hall.

None came out. It was like the yawning maw of some great monster drawing in an endless current of human food. At the door Dix Van Dyck paused and surveyed the interior.

His eye kindled. He was a devotee of neither whisky nor dancing, but here was life—life in plenty, action, confusion, clamor. In such places and in such moments the tang of the world came most sharply home to him. Moreover, there was a natural caution impelling the pause at the doorway.

Inside might be a dozen foes, and a foe to Dix Van Dyck would not wait to give a warning. He would either flee or else start shooting from the hip.

Big Dix slipped into the shadow on one side and turned his leonine, ugly head from side to side in a slow survey. His trained eyes photographed a hundred faces—not one was known to him.

The smile which had gone out while he made this preliminary survey now returned. He canted his head to one side and drank in the confusion of sounds which swept from dancing floor, bar, and gaming tables, all in one room.

"Rolls five for his point. . . . Come, Phoebe; talk to me, little black-eyes! Rolls five. . . . Raise that ten. . . . Line up, gents; line up and name your poison. . . . Hey, Bill

—I seen a gent over to Tuskogee. . . . My dance, Blondy. . . . Red seven! Show that card! By God, I say you will. . . . Say, boys, I'm some dry; where's the water-hole; lead me to it, I can't see!"

Dix Van Dyck sauntered to the bar. On his lips the mischievous, boyish smile which all Guadalupe knew and feared was growing. In his quiet moments that eagle nose, straight, thin mouth, and forbidding eyes made him seem a man to be avoided and given ground, but his smile gave an expression of deluding gentleness to his features. Strangers, seeing him smile, were apt to invite him to a drink or ask him for a five-spot with equal readiness.

But those who knew understood that that smile meant a deep desire for action. It was like the grin of the pugilist who stands in his corner rubbing his shoes in the rosin and waiting confidently for the bell.

First he examined the dancing floor, chiefly because the men were in movement there. But the monotonous whine of the violin and the regular movements of the dancers through the mist of smoke disgusted him. One of the dance-hall girls saw his smile and stopped before him, expectant; but his face sobered long enough to return her glance, and she went on hastily, answered. Then he looked down the bar.

Whisky itself had no charms for him, but he sometimes drank merely for excitement—a token, in Guadalupe, for men to vacate the barroom in which this grizzly happened to be quenching his thirst.

The bar to-night, however, had no attraction for him. A drunken man staggered past him; he followed the uncertain progress with contempt. Next he looked to the gaming tables.

They were operating under full blast, the gamblers stimulated by the dance-music on one hand and the high-power whisky on the other. Crap tables, roulette, chuck-a-luck, faro-poker—every table had a full house, and Dix Van Dyck waited for an opening.

It was during this delay that he saw her enter, and turned full toward her to look again. Obviously she was not one of the hired dancing-girls. Neither had she come to buy whisky—a common occurrence.

She loitered in the door carelessly, as he had done the moment before, apparently looking for a place in which she could amuse herself.

Booted, spurred, and with a regulation forty-five belted around her waist, her appearance was not much out of keeping with that of the average ranch girl. What distinguished her was, in the first place an exquisitely slender, olive-skinned, dark-eyed beauty, and in the second place an air of truly masculine detachment.

On account of her beauty Dix Van Dyck looked to see a dozen men jump up and accost her; but instead they merely turned their heads, stared at her, and then resumed their occupations.

He was thoroughly puzzled. Apparently she was known; apparently she was good. But if so, what was she doing in this hell-hole?

Now it must be understood that in the Southwest there are only two classes of women. There are the bad and the good. The bad are what bad women are everywhere—very, very bad. On the other hand, the good are exceedingly good. They can travel alone anywhere, day or night, and as long as there are no Mexicans in sight they are perfectly safe.

And unless he is conveniently close to the border even a Mexican keeps clear of a white girl as he would of a rattler. For he knows that vengeance in such cases follows quickly and surely.

In a country where the need for men is great and where the place for women is small, their value is proportionately high. In that country men do not gossip about a woman, for slander meets the reply of bullets. In that country a woman can take liberties with a man which would damn her forever in the eyes of Northern society, but in the Southwest nothing is taken for granted about the weaker sex.

Chivalry wears no plumes and knight-hood bears no title, but there gallantry is a reality and not a name. To the Southwesterner a good woman is daughter or sister or mother. She can eat his food, ride his horse, draw his revolver, and even share his bunk.

Yet she will not draw a whisper of suspi-

cion until by her own act she confesses that she is not of the elect. Such an act is the entry of a place like this one of Jerry Conklin's in the Double Bend.

All this must be understood in order to read the confusion of mind with which Dix Van Dyck stared at the feminine intruder. He read in the glances of the men that deference which is accorded to only one type of woman in the Southwest. She was known and she was respected. Then what was she doing there?

He leaned back against the bar and scowled steadily at her. Something told him that he was on the trail of excitement.

As for the girl, she swept the great room with a calm eye, almost like the glance of an ennuied man looking for excitement. At last she approached a crap table. It was surrounded by a dense circle, two deep, every man intent on his game. But at her coming one of the men glanced up, recognized her, raised his hat, and stepped back to surrender his place.

The wonder of Dix Van Dyck made his face redden furiously. As for the other men at the gaming table, they turned toward the girl with broad grins, such as those which proclaim that the luck is running against the house. Dix Van Dyck caught the man on the stick (he who handles the dice for the house), in a keen scrutiny. The fellow was scowling blackly. The girl took the dice.

Her hand dipped in a pocket of her short riding-skirt and came out with the glint of yellow. She made a few casts and lost. A low groan came from the gamesters; evidently they had wagered heavily on her luck. The girl stamped in vexation, which made Dix Van Dyck smile. At least she was like other women in being a bad loser. She drew out another gold coin and tossed it on the table.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF THE CROSS.

AFTER that her luck apparently held consistently good. The others at the table were still wagering on her and with her, and the payer at that table did little

besides constantly shovel out the coin of the house.

However, the other men in the house paid little attention to the scene. In his part of the country Dix knew that such sensational winning would have drawn everyone about in a great circle to watch the big coin roll in. He gained a sudden and deep respect for a community where such prodigious luck passed with hardly a notice.

It was like a crowd in a new mining town, where gold almost loses significance except when it comes raw from the earth.

At length the girl left the table, and the payer wiped his sweaty forehead and turned a venomous glance after her retreating figure. She went straight to the roulette wheel, a small group following. Dix Van Dyck drew a little closer and saw that she had taken the most extreme chance which the game affords—she had placed a whole handful of gold on a single number.

The wheel whirled, the man behind it watching with anxious eyes. It slowed; it purred and clicked softly to a stop—and on her number.

Stack after stack of coin was counted out and shoved to her—thirty-six for one. The payer watched her with a wistful eye.

She placed her entire winnings again—and still on that most dubious of all gambling chances—a single number. Again the wheel whirled, purred to a stop, and again the girl won.

The payer shook his head in gloomy doubt, and counted out the money slowly, stack by stack. Plainly, it would not take much more to break the bank.

But before he had half finished the count the girl, as if impatient, picked up a handful of gold—less than her original wager—dropped it into her pocket, and said carelessly: "Keep the rest of it, Bill. I ride light. Keep the rest of it, and the next time a gent drops in here broke—and thirsty—buy him a drink and stake him."

The payer ceased in his count and stared after her with blinking, uncomprehending eyes while she strolled away to another table. Here she lingered only a moment, and then passed on to the dancing floor.

Dix Van Dyck waited for some one to follow her, some one to take the chair next

to hers; but no one moved. She sat at a table alone; men passed with smiles, but without any close approach. If she had been a leper she could not have been more sedulously avoided.

Dix thought of many things: of some terrible, contagious disease; of insanity, or perhaps she was the sweetheart of some noted gunman.

Yes, that would explain it. Dix Van Dyck hitched his belt a little higher and laughed softly, unpleasantly to himself. Most of his jests were of a nature which he alone could appreciate. He turned to a bearded, unshaven man next to him.

"Stranger," he said, "will you drink?"

"Don't mind," said the other.

"Red-eye?"

"Yep."

"Partner," continued Dix Van Dyck amiably, while the bartender was spinning the tall bottle toward them, "I been watching a little play that looks sort of queer to me. I'm a stranger in these parts, and maybe you could put me wise."

"Maybe."

"I been watching that girl over there to the table by the dancing floor."

"Jack?"

"Is that her name?"

"Yep."

"None of the boys don't seem much friendly with her. Can't she dance? Can't she talk? Or is she owned private by a gunman?"

The other grinned.

"She can dance; she can talk; and there ain't any man in these parts fool enough to want to own her."

With this enigmatic reply he rested content, as if there were nothing more to be said. Dix Van Dyck blinked and drew in his breath; his very heart was eaten up with curiosity.

"Bad actor?" he asked.

"Ain't you really heard nothing about Jack?" asked the other, with naive wonder.

"Never."

"Follow me."

He led the way to the door of the saloon and squinted to right and left down the long line of tethered horses. One shape stood out through the half-broken gloom of

the early night, a tall white horse, glimmering through the darkness. Even by that faint light the practised eye of Dix Van Dyck made out an unusually beautiful piece of horseflesh.

"If you don't know the girl," said the stranger, "maybe you recognize the hoss? That white one down the line."

"Ain't nothing I can recognize him by," asserted Dix.

"H-m-m," said the other, and scratched his head in the effort to find some clue which the other might be able to follow. "Ever hear of McGurk?"

"Sure," said Dix Van Dyck. "I've lived some way off from these parts, but I know McGurk is about the fastest gunman that ever fanned a hammer."

"McGurk was," answered the stranger.

"Dead?"

"Worse'n dead. Done for. Take water from a Chinaman."

"Well?"

The other persisted in his irritating, roundabout way of telling what he knew. As if he wished to draw out the relish of a rare morsel.

"Ever hear of Boone's gang?"

"Seems like I have," murmured Dix Van Dyck, "seems like I heard they was all cleaned up by McGurk."

"You heard wrong—a pile wrong," said the other. "That girl is Boone's daughter."

"The devil she is!"

"The devil she ain't. And mostly devil she is, at that. And that white hoss there in the dark is McGurk's hoss."

"Is he here?"

"Nope; the girl rides the hoss."

The iron hand of Dix Van Dyck gripped the shoulder of his companion and his voice rolled, low and muttering, like approaching thunder.

"Partner, I been asking you straight questions, one man to the other. Maybe I been asking too much, but in my part of the country nobody don't josh me when I feel serious. Partner, I'm a pile serious right now. Out with it. D'ye mean to tell me that that girl in there finished McGurk—McGurk, who killed—"

"I know—McGurk who killed a hun-

dred gun-fighters. But all we know is that McGurk started on the trail of Boone's gang and that he finished 'em all off except one young feller who beat it East and got married, and the girl. We know McGurk started on that trail with a white horse. We know the girl come down from the mountains riding that same white horse. Partner, them are the cards, and you can put 'em together any way you want."

Dix Van Dyck swallowed hard and then set his teeth. It was almost more than he could understand. He had a faint suspicion that the other was amusing himself with generous lies. If so, there would be an unhappy ending to the tale. He decided to draw out the man further.

"Is that," he said, "what scares 'em away from that girl in there?"

The other looked up with a scowl which changed almost at once into friendliness.

"Look here, pal," he explained, "you're all due for a cold trail. I'll tell you straight. When Jack Boone come down from the hills there was another with her. He was one of the last of Boone's old gang—the best of the bad lot. All we know is what he told us. He said the girl had got hold of a little cross—this sounds funny, I know—and that the cross give her good luck, but give bad luck to every one near her—her friends, particular. He says that cross was what made her able to beat McGurk, and as long as she had it on there wasn't any man could handle her."

"That sounds all pretty damned fishy to me," grumbled Dix Van Dyck.

"Don't it?" agreed the other. "And it sounded fishy to the lot of us. But the first thing we noticed was that this feller wanted nothing more than to get free of Jack Boone. He blew north and ain't been heard of since. Then Bud Ganton, a dirty half-breed with a record it took half an hour to read, made up his mind that he was going to get the loot that the girl was said to have.

"He started out from town for her cabin where she was living up in the hills. The next day the girl come riding in to tell the deputy marshal that there was a dead man out to her house. The marshal went out and found Ganton pumped full of lead and

both his own guns out and with a bullet fired out of each.

"Now there was only one thing Ganton was any good for, and that was a gun-play, but with his sixes he was a world-beater. I've seen him make a play and he could make his gun talk French, I'm here to state. Nobody knows what happened exactly, out there to the girl's cabin. But it was sure plain that Ganton had time to get out his guns and make a play before he dropped. But the girl was too fast for him and drilled him clean. Now if the girl didn't have something like that cross to help her out, how'd she ever have got away with Ganton?"

"If she was Boone's daughter, he sure taught her how to fan a six," answered Dix Van Dyck.

"Sure, but that ain't all the reason we got for thinking that that little cross of hers makes her safe and raises hell for her friends.

"There was Luther Carey. He was knocked off'n his feet by Jack's pretty face—which she's some looker—and he said bad luck could go to the devil. He started on the trail of Jack. She warned him fair and square that it was a plumb cold trail, and that he'd get bad luck if he stuck around.

"But Luther stayed. And about a week later he was bucked off a little tame cayuse that a boy could of rid. He was bucked off and busted his neck when he hit the sand. I'm asking you, was that nacheral? No, I'll tell a man it wasn't!

"Then Hopkins, that Eastern dude that was a mining engineer. He come along and seen Jack and went crazy about her. We warned him fair and square, and she warned him, too, they say. But he kept going out to see her. And then one day he dropped down a shaft in the Buckhorn mine, and they had to go down with a broom and a shovel and sweep up what was left of him.

"There's two things we blame to the cross Jack wears. There's plenty of others; I could sit here all night and tell 'em to you. Take her luck for cards, for instance. You never see her lose more 'n one out of every three passes. If she wanted to, she could break every game in the State; but money don't seem to mean nothing to her.

"Hang around her? Dance with her? Partner, I'd a pile rather jump off'n Eagle Bluff. It'd be an easier way of dying, but no surer."

CHAPTER IV.

THE IMP OF THE PERVERSE.

SO saying, the stranger turned and walked back into the bar. Even the telling of the narrative seemed to make him need a drink.

Now, it was well known in Guadalupe that if you wanted Dix Van Dyck to do a thing the best way was to urge him toward the opposite. If there were two roads, one safe and one dangerous, it was thoroughly understood that one could always make Dix take the safe road by urging him to choose the dangerous.

If the stranger at Double Bend had been inspired by an angel from heaven he could not have spoken more effectively to make Dix Van Dyck seek out the girl, Jack. In fact, as he stepped back into the dance-hall his mind was already made up. He only waited for a convenient moment before approaching her.

But although his nature was strangely perverse, there was little that was wholly rash about Dix Van Dyck. In the first place, he believed with his entire soul every word which the stranger had told him about Jack and her mysterious cross. He had seen the effect of that cross in her gambling. Moreover, there is a deep element of superstition in those who live between Mexicans on the one side and such men as prospectors on the other. Luck becomes an almost personal god.

Because Dix Van Dyck believed thoroughly that this girl held good luck for herself and bad luck for all who came near her, he was afraid—deeply afraid. He felt a prickling chill run up his back as he looked at her. But it was the sort of fear which a man feels when he looks at a grim antagonist with whom he knows that he is about to fight. It was the sort of fear which mingles with one's desire to leap from a high place to destruction.

It was the imp of perverse which lives in

the soul of every man, but above all was present in Dix Van Dyck.

He was afraid. He would rather have faced a dozen guns in the hands of desperadoes than sit for a single second at the side of this girl. For this very reason he would not have missed the opportunity for all the gold in the world placed at his feet.

He was shaken to his very soul with fear in advancing toward a danger against which there was no known method of fighting. And because of that nothing could stop him. He hesitated only long enough to survey the girl sharply, thoroughly, weigh her strength, estimate her character.

He could see only her profile, for she leaned forward with one elbow resting on the table, and her chin in the palm of her hand; the other arm lay across the back of the chair. An attitude of awkward repose in most people, but in this girl Dix Van Dyck felt a capacity for instant action.

In the fraction of a second a sleeping dog can uncurl from the most clumsy position and leap a dozen feet away from danger. He felt the same possibility in this girl—a catlike activity—a subconscious guard which remained alert even when mind and body slept. It even occurred to him that she might be perfectly aware of his scrutiny.

Once more his flesh prickled and grew cold. So he strode boldly up and took a chair near her. Her eyes swung around to him slowly, slowly, as if a careful force regulated the movement.

He found himself staring into pitchy black depths, wide, unconcerned, meaningless. He felt as if the eyes were looking through him and past him at some object in the infinite distance. For a man squints to see an object near at hand but stares with open eye at something far away.

Judging by her eyes, he might have been a speck of white on the far horizon, an indefinite particle, whether cloud or sail. It whipped all the fighting instinct into his brain.

"My name," he said doggedly, "is Dix Van Dyck."

Her voice, in answer, was neither frivolous nor impertinent, but rather that of one who is wearied by the necessity of speech.

"My name don't concern you, stranger. If you want to know it, ask one of the men. He'll tell you, along with a lot of reasons, why you shouldn't be sitting here."

"Lady," answered Dix Van Dyck, "I've heard all those reasons. To put it straight, that's why I'm here."

The first spark of interest burned up in the dark eyes and something like the ghost of a smile softened her mouth at the corners, as if in faint recognition of a kindred spirit.

"I've heard about good luck that follows you and bad luck that follows every one around you."

"And you don't believe it?" she asked, growing somewhat cold again.

"I believe it," said Dix Van Dyck calmly, "as if I read it in the Bible, but it ain't any real reason why you should sit here alone."

"Listen," said the girl, and she leaned gravely toward him, "I got an idea that I know what you are, and I like your kind; but you're on the wrong trail—a cold trail, partner. No matter what they told you they didn't tell you enough, or you'd have been stopped. There's bad luck around me. That ain't all. There's hell!"

Her eyes widened, and she cast a glance over her shoulder. As if Fate listened there, an impalpable presence, grinning invisibly at the warnings she spoke to Dix Van Dyck. She had been beautiful even when she sat there impassive, but now that a color was flushing the olive-tinted skin and life had come into her eyes, she was the most lovely woman Dix Van Dyck had ever seen.

She thrilled him like a strain of music. She uplifted him like a passage of noble poetry. She lured him like the purple distances of the desert.

"Lady," he said, "speakin' in general, the only thing I want is action, and being near you promises a pile of it. If I bother you I'll be on my way. If I don't, I'd sure like to hang around a while."

She considered this cavalier utterance with a frown and a thoughtful, sidewise glance which suddenly lifted to his face.

"If I told you to go, would you?" she asked.

Dix Van Dyck flushed.

"If you say the word, there ain't nothing I'd do quicker."

"Honest?"

The blood died away from his face, and left it splotted with gray, tans, and purples.

"Talkin' man to man," he said evenly, "it'd be some hard job to break away just now, but I'll go if I have to."

"Then go," said the girl sharply.

The friendliness died from her eyes and they became in an instant as blank as they had been at the first. He pushed back his chair, setting his teeth in anger. But even as he caught the edge of the table and put weight on it to rise he knew that he could not go. It was like a desertion before the battle was fought. It was like cowardice under fire. He settled back in the chair, breathing hard, and glared at her.

"You're saying that to try me out," he said.

"I never meant anything more in my life," said the girl.

"And yet," he persisted, "you was pretty friendly only a minute ago."

"Was I?" she queried with calm-eyed insolence. "Well, I'm tired of you now."

He felt a great desire to take that round, slender throat between thumbs and forefingers; he could almost tell how it would crunch under the pressure. Then he remembered with a cold rush of shame that she was a woman. A woman, and therefore a creature of infinite wiles. The thought held him; he studied her.

"Well?" she asked coldly. "Are you going?"

"D'you know," pondered Dix Van Dyck, his grim eyes boring into hers, "I got an idea that if I get up and leave this table you'll despise me. Am I right?"

The question had the effect of a sharp jerk on the reins. The girl straightened almost with a snap and her serious frown centered steadily on him.

Before she could answer he swept on: "Look at the way I'm fixed. All my life I've been hunting action. Most I could find was hounding a few yaller-hearted greasers. Now I get to you. Action just nacherally follers you around. I wouldn't

have to hunt for it. I find you, and you start to give me the run. I ask you, man to man: Is it fair? Is it square?"

There was a movement of her lips. He raised his right hand suddenly and pointed.

"Right now," he said, "you got a smile all ready to pop out, and you're fighting to keep it back. Am I right, lady?"

She could not help it. The smile came, and then a bubbling laugh. It ran on and on through musical variations like the sound of water trickling over rocks and plunging into tinkling shallows and chiming in deep pools.

In all his life Dix Van Dyck had never heard a sound which fascinated him so. For he could not tell whether she was laughing with him or at him. The laughter stopped. Sitting straight in her chair, she looked at him with marvelously bright eyes, and the smile coming and going at the corners of her mouth.

CHAPTER V.

A FIGHT AGAINST LUCK.

"DO I get you right, Dix Van Dyck?" she asked. "Am I sort of a bait that pulls trouble your way? Is that why you want to hang around with me?"

"Jack—can I call you that—"

"Sure."

"Jack, you guessed right the first time. That's why I want to hang around. Here I am, six feet two, hard as nails, handy with two guns, and nothing to do. Can you beat that?"

"Nope," said the girl, and broke into her musical chuckle again. "Nope, you beat the world, partner!"

"Thanks," grinned Dix Van Dyck, "I'll just oil up my guns and get in fighting shape, and we'll make a team of it."

She grew serious again, shaking her head.

"It won't do. I can't let you do it. Look here, Dix Van Dyck, I like you more 'n any man I've run into in a long time. That's telling you straight. I'm not going to let you go to hell because of a fool idea. If you want action just shoot out these lights and I'll guarantee you all the action you want."

"But you see," explained Dix Van Dyck sadly, "the trouble a man makes ain't half so pleasin' as the kind he just runs into sort of accidental. Understand?"

"Yep."

"How long," said Dix Van Dyck wistfully, "before things most generally starts."

"Mostly different a lot," said Jacqueline.

"In the mean time," said he, "there's considerable room on the floor. Do we dance?"

She hesitated, as if she still wished to argue the question with him; as if she fought the temptation to let him stay; but then her head nodded with the rhythm of the music—she started up, and in an instant they were gliding across the floor.

There is a strange and dangerous potency in the dance. There is no need of polished, gleaming floor, of bright lights, of a numerous and accomplished orchestra, or of a brilliant assembly of women and men. There is no need of all this. Granted an age a little under thirty, a rhythm supplied by a rusty, stringed piano, the floor of a barn or the stones of a street, and the result is the same—an intoxication, a forgetfulness of the world. Two bodies moving in harmony with a thought, and that thought one of beauty.

Faces tilt up—a light comes upon them—in their blood is the fragrance of spring and the richness of autumn—the pulse of life runs quicker, quicker, races—and the two strike closer to the heart of things.

So it was with Dix Van Dyck and Jacqueline. She danced rather clumsily, at first, as though she had almost forgotten the steps, but before he became conscious of a disappointment she changed and grew more warmly alive in his arms. There was a catlike lightness in her step so that the sway of her body followed him almost as if she were poised in air and drawn hither and thither mysteriously—at his will.

And as for Jack, she glimpsed the glances of envy and admiration which followed her and knew that she was dancing divinely—knew it and was grateful to the man who held her. The incense of flattery had long been absent, and now it swept up glorious until her nostrils trembled to inhale it deep.

She had been a creature of action, of masculine and terrible action, and as such accepted by the men and the women among whom she moved. Now she became, in an instant, femininely appealing, beautiful. A new and mighty strength filled her.

With all her heart she hated the bearded man who tapped Dix Van Dyck on his shoulder in the middle of the dance. They had paused at the edge of the dance-floor and the man said:

"Stranger, be on your way. You've started your own little hell by dancing with Jack, but some one else is liable to put on the finishing touch. There was a greaser in here a minute ago—a bad one by the look—asking after a man like you. The deputy marshal—Glasgow—was with him. I sent 'em down the street, but they'll be back. Take my advice, and don't wait."

With that, he turned on his heel and Dix Van Dyck, a towering figure in the crowd, stiffened and stared after him. Truly the arm of Sheriff Onate was long.

"The bad luck," he nodded, and stared down in the face of the girl.

"The bad luck," she agreed. "It didn't wait."

She said it half ruefully—half carelessly; like one familiar with danger.

"Take the back door," she advised, "It's the easiest way out."

"The easiest way," said the big man calmly, "is to get back to our table and wait for what comes. This ain't the finish; it's only the beginning of a long trail."

She followed him back to the table. It was only because she wanted a chance to argue the point.

"But you see," she explained, as they slipped again into their chairs, Van Dyck facing the door, "that everything is against you. The deputy marshal can call on every one in the house, if he wants 'em. Besides, do you know the country in case you make a getaway?"

"Not a mile of it. I come from the South."

"What've you done that started the law after you?"

"Greasers."

"Nothing but them?"

"Nothing. We've got a greaser for

sheriff down in Chaparna County. He's after my scalp."

"And you're going to sit here and see this through?"

"Sure. What would you do?"

She avoided the question.

"It's a crazy idea. Take my word: the best thing it to cut and run. It's bad to have a sheriff after you. It's a lot worse to have a marshal, and Glasgow sticks to a trail like glue to a dog's tail."

Apparently he barely heard her words, but sat stiff and straight in his chair, his keen eyes plunging into the future. By deep and sympathetic intuition she knew all that was passing in his mind.

His reason told him in no uncertain terms to take the advice of the girl and leave the saloon. But the same perverse instinct which had first made the man hunt her out now held him in his chair waiting for the surely approaching danger.

She knew at once that it was useless to argue longer with him. But the suspense began to make her uncomfortable and sick inside—the qualm which comes to the soldier before the battle.

What made it doubly deadly was the noise which continued unabated throughout the rest of the great room. From the gaming tables, from the bar, from the orchestra, from the dance floor and the tables around it, the same unbroken stream of chatter, cries, curses, laughter poured out at them.

It was like a grim parody of the whole of life. Into this gay throng death was about to come with silent steps, stretch out his arm, and beckon his victim.

Then would fall an instant of silence, a few cries of horror, but almost at once the noise would be recommenced. Conscience would be drowned in the clamor of self-conscious gaiety.

"There's going to be a gun-play," said Dix Van Dyck, "and I don't want you in the danger zone. Go to another table."

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled. He got the impression, somehow, that she valued her life less than anything in the world. He knew, in fact, that when a woman turns daredevil she passes beyond the limit of any man, but he was unprepared for this contemptuous indifference.

He made no further effort to persuade her. His mind was too filled with conjecture. Was it indeed true that the girl was fatal to her friends? Or was the story half lie and half rumor?

Against a common danger he was willing to take his chance, but to have his hands tied and the muzzle of his gun jolted by fate in the crisis of action was too much. It was superhuman—it was ghostly and paralyzing.

All of this Jack read in his face. She saw the keen eyes sink deeper under the bush of brow; saw his cheeks contract and the lower jaw thrust out; saw his forehead turn a sickly white, glimmering with perspiration.

It was not cowardice. She had seen other men, in her company, face danger with the same aspect. But this man was different. Fear turned him cold, but it did not make him shake. It occurred to her, vaguely, that this might be the man who could break the power of the strange charms she carried. She could not stand the suspense of his silence any longer.

"How can you tell," she said, "when the man who's after you comes in?"

"I'll wait," answered the big, white-faced man, "until he makes a dive for his gun."

"Wait for that before you draw?"

"Yes."

"Then why not order your coffin now?"

"Because I take my chance on beating him to his gun."

"Beat two of them?" she repeated incredulously.

"Don't talk," he answered sharply, "I got to sit here and do a pile of thinking."

So she lapsed into silence. The face of Van Dyck, naturally homely, now grew horrible as the nervous strain of the wait told upon him. She began to have an odd feeling that she could hear the ticking of a clock somewhere through the din. It would begin very soft, click-click-clicking through the room and gradually rising to a crescendo, louder and louder and louder till she wondered that every one in the room did not hear it.

It rose louder and more rapid until she wanted to jump up from the table with an

outcry of horror. And then she discovered that the mysterious beating was the drum of her own excited heart. And she dared not rise.

It was a singular duel of courage between her and the man opposite. On him the danger rested; but upon her, she felt more and more strongly, would lie the blame for his death. For she did not dream of any outcome to the encounter.

She forced herself back to calmness, and considered the figure of Van Dyck carefully, critically. It was that of the natural fighter, beyond a doubt, hard, lean, marvelously suggestive of activity in spite of its size. And her eyes centered on the hands.

They had never worn gloves, it seemed, for they were as brown as his cheeks. They had never performed the labors of the range, for the fingers were long, sinewy, fleshless, and when the fist closed the row of knuckles stood out sharply.

Nervous fingers. They hovered here and there. Sometimes, falling into a detached mood, it seemed to her that the hands on the opposite edge of the table were two spiders, deadly, long-leaping, and crouching, about to leap at some prey. Perhaps at her throat.

Fear of the man grew slowly up in her. He was in an agony of apprehension; she knew he did not really expect to outlive the coming fight; she knew he believed in the potent power of the cross she wore and its damning bad luck. There remained his will-power and his pride. It made a terrible and silent fight—a man within a man.

Then that slender, long-fingered right hand grew tense on the edge of the table. He leaned back a little in his chair so that he would have free play to get at his revolvers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAMP-FIRE.

"YOU see him?" she whispered.

"Don't turn!" he warned her, softly, fiercely. "I think I see the man. I think I see a greaser I knew in Chaparna County."

"And the marshal?"

"There's no one with him—no one I can see."

"Thank God."

"Not yet. This Mex is a bad one—if he's the man I think. Pedro Alvarez—long record—snap-shot."

"What's he doing?"

She yearned for a single glance back. But such a glance might have betrayed her companion to the hunter. Small things, she knew, frequently turned the odds of such battles.

"He's walkin' about—slow. He's looking hard."

"Dix Van Dyck, you're white! It ain't too late. Start for that back door before he sees you."

"You're right, Jack, I'm scared; not of the Mex, but of that cross you wear; but I'm not too scared to fight; my hand don't shake none."

It was, in fact, as steady as a rock.

"Get your hand on your gun."

"Nope, I'll keep it here till he makes his move. I'm givin' your cross every chance to get in its work, see?"

"Maybe he won't sight you."

"Maybe."

"Then—"

But the words froze on her lips. The eyes of Dix Van Dyck had widened and narrowed suddenly, and into them came the gleam of recognition. She knew that somewhere behind her a man stood, staring at her companion. Death was there—its wings outspread—hesitating which to strike.

Then the hand of Dix Van Dyck shot down and a gun flashed with a crazy wobble over the edge of the table. The wobble came from the force of the explosion that kicked the muzzle of the gun high. No answering shot; she rose, whirling from her chair, and saw a tall, thin Mexican, in an enormous sombrero, toppling backward. From his outstretched arms a revolver dropped. He struck a post, staggered, and then pitched forward on his face. With both his guns now in his hands Dix Van Dyck stood like one transfixed, staring at his work.

She caught at his arm.

"Follow me. Glasgow will be here in a jiffy."

And she fled before him toward the door, through it, and into the blessed dimness of the night. A form raced by her.

"What was it?" shouted the voice of Glasgow in her ear.

"A Mex shot," she answered. "Your man's inside."

He leaped into the door of the saloon with his gun poised, and at the same time she saw the big form of Van Dyck lunge across the street, making for the stables. In a moment she sprang into her own saddle and waited.

In hardly more than half a minute there came a thunder of galloping hoofs over the wooden floor of the stable and she spurred into place beside him. Behind them babel was issuing from the door of the dance-hall and pouring out onto the street, but a winding of the way shut them from her view almost immediately.

He was well mounted, she saw at once, not on a horse like the matchless stallion which carried her, but on a tall charger which covered the distance with mighty, swinging strides; he towered above her on this steed by a whole foot, and she felt suddenly reduced to impotence again, as she had felt when she sat opposite him in the dance-hall, waiting. However, he reined in his horse when she reined in hers, keeping always half a length behind her. At length she reduced the pace to a gentle trot.

"No chase?" he called.

"Nope."

"What's wrong?"

"They know you're with me."

"Well?"

"And they know I'm hard to catch."

He chuckled through the dark, and she added rather spitefully: "Besides, they'll wait for your bad luck."

"Bad luck be damned!" cried the ringing voice of Dix Van Dyck. "I've broken the bad luck to-night."

"Is it better," she added almost angrily, resenting his confidence, "to be a free man in Double Bend or on the run in the desert with Marshal Glasgow behind you. I ask you that, man to man? Is that good luck or bad?"

"Any way you want to put it," he replied carelessly. "It's the sort of luck I want. Besides, there's one greaser less in the world, and another burr under the saddle of Señor Onate, damn his eyes! Where'll we camp?"

"Up this cañon to the left, a few miles. There's a good spring there and a circle of cottonwoods. We'll camp in the center of 'em."

"Risk a fire?"

"I tell you, they ain't going to hunt you to-night. They know you're with me. They know my hoss can carry double farther and faster than any of their ponies. Maybe they won't hunt at all, but trust to your bad luck."

Over this he brooded in silence while they worked their way up the rough bed of the ravine until they reached the circle of trees. They were ancient, mighty cottonwoods, nourished by the water from the spring.

In the center of the little grove they kindled a fire, for they found an abundance of dry wood, and the whole, half-rotten trunk of a fallen giant. Then, propping themselves against their saddles, they sat on opposite sides of the fire; he rolled and lighted a cigarette and she sat with her hands locked in front of her knees and her face turned up to the stars.

Even the sailor has less love for the stars than the dweller of the desert. To the sailor they are guides and steering points, but to the desert dweller they are friends—the eyes of friends which look down through the long, breathless silence of the nights.

The two held their positions for minute after minute, unchanging. They were happy, for the quiet, the sense of space was their proper environment. Now and then the flicker of the fire flashed clearly across their faces, but for the most part they were withdrawn and lost in the deep gloom of the night, and the glow of the fire with its thousand shadows actually helped to conceal them.

Tall, broad, black as the heart of the night, the cottonwoods fenced them in. There was but one way for them to look, and that was straight up, past the dizzy

tops of the trees and on to the yellow lights of the stars.

Up to these the girl stared, but the man, his head lowered to the palms of his hands and his face made ominous and ugly by the fire-shadows, stared steadily across at Jack. An age-old instinct, perhaps, directed them, for woman looks up—in acceptance—and man looks down—in doubt. By the flare and the leap of the fire he was studying her features, and every penetrating glimpse was like the reading of a new page in an endless story, each one strangely revealing.

Finally he got some fresh wood and piled it discreetly, so that it made a thin little arm of flame, stabbing into the night, and by that light he could look steadily at the girl. She paid no attention. Her face was still raised, and her expression was one of deep, vague content.

Looking at her in that manner he could well understand that no human thing in all the world was necessary to her. It gave her a singular charm—this same independence of attitude. And also it was deeply challenging. It made him long to break through her reserve. Without knowing it, he adopted toward her little household gods the attitude of an iconoclast.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ICONOCLAST.

"DID y' ever hear about souls that get tangled up after death and come back to earth in the wrong shapes?" he said suddenly.

"I dunno," answered the girl. "Seems to me like I heard something about it. Why?"

"Well, I been thinking, wouldn't it be funny if the soul of some old sour-dough come back and hopped into the body of a beautiful girl."

"Well?"

"It'd be kind of funny, that's all," he murmured contentedly.

"H-m!" said the girl. "Maybe you don't noways mean me by that?"

He was much surprised.

"You? Did I say you?"

"Which I'm sort of silent," she explained suspiciously.

"Well, it'd be a funny thing, eh?"

"That idea don't interest me none," she said coldly.

The silence fell heavily over them. Each knew that each was thinking of the other. As for the girl, she did not understand, very clearly, the imputations behind the unusual question of Dix Van Dyck, but what she did feel most acutely was the challenge of his personality. It was, in a way, like a hand that had reached out and touched her on the shoulder, compelling her attention. She resented it keenly and strove to fasten her attention once more on the cold twinkle of the stars.

"D'you know," she said, thinking out loud, "that when the stars are as bright as they are to-night, sometimes I feel just as if the old earth was pushing up closer to them—feel as if I was sailing right up through the air!"

"H-m!" grunted Dix Van Dyck. "That idea don't interest me none."

She admitted the counterthrust by nodding her head sharply and scowling across to him. His vast, boyish grin of delight met her eye, and she jerked her head back to stare once more at the stars. However, she was grateful that the night would obscure the burning heat of her face.

The stars, alas, had grown into a confused swirl of faint light. She found that she was making no effort to see them clearly. She was concentrating on the effort to find an answer to this insolent fellow. All the time there was that old sensation of surrounding strength—surrounding personality. The man was reaching out to her. For what?

"I feel," she said, "as if I was inside a house and you was knockin' at the door. What d'ye want?"

"If you was inside a house and I was knocking at the door," responded the irrepressible Dix Van Dyck indirectly, "I got an idea that the door would stay locked."

"I got an idea," said the girl coldly, "that you're right."

This reply somewhat damped his spirits, but he rallied himself sternly to the trail.

After all, she was only a girl. Yet he began to guess more and more clearly at the soul of the sour-dough.

"There ain't no use bein' strange," he assured her. "You might as well get to know me to-day as to-morrow."

"To-morrow," she said calmly, "I ain't going to be with you."

"If you leave," he announced, "I'll follow."

"I'll go straight back to Double Bend," she said maliciously.

"I'll ride after you to Double Bend."

"To Marshal Glasgow?" she asked in real alarm.

"Why not? I'd take a chance with him."

"Some men was born fools, edicated fools, and fools by choice, and I'm thinkin' you're all three rolled into one."

Nevertheless, she was much moved. Her voice told the tale.

"Now that this here partnership is begun—" he started.

She cut in: "Who said partnership?"

"Why," he cried with a voice of much pain, "I thought all the time that that was understood. That was why I tried out the bad luck back there in the dance-hall."

"Now," she answered scornfully, "you're lyin'. You done that for pure deviltry. I seen it in your eye."

"Anyway," he went on, contentedly, "that was the way I understood it, so we'll leave it there."

"Will we?" she said with rising anger.

"Am I going to have you trailin' me around the desert whether I want you or not? Say, Dix Van Dyck, ain't this a free country?"

"Are you pretty mad?" he asked cautiously.

"I am!"

"Well," said he, "that's good."

"Good?"

Her anger, apparently, choked back further words.

"Yes," he explained, "it shows we're on the way to being friends. That's what I've learned from women. Get 'em mad and they're two-thirds yours."

"I s'pose," she answered with dangerous calm, "that you know a pile about women. Kind of a heart-breaker, eh?"

"I know quite a bit about 'em," ad-

mitted the man easily. "You see, I ain't been doing much all my life outside of fighting men and making love to women. Takin' it all in all, I don't know which is the most exciting, but I'd kind of put a woman above a gun fight."

She thought at first that it might be pure banter, but he spoke so steadily and evenly that she was deceived. Then, remembering his manliness and courage of the earlier evening, she took pity on him.

"If you're playing me for the common run of girls," she said, "you're on another cold trail, Van Dyck. Men ain't a thing to me. Less'n nothing, in fact."

"That just goes to show," said Dix Van Dyck, "that you're built along my own lines inside. You see, girls have been less'n nothing to me, too."

"What you been doing, then, lying to 'em?"

"Sort of. And mostly sort of angling around and waiting for the right one to come along."

"I s'pose," she said scornfully, "that I'm the right one."

"Nope. Not yet. You look all right, but I got to glance you over a bit more before I take you."

An inarticulate murmur of rage answered him.

"You *are* mad, ain't you?" he said with an open delight. "Let's see?"

And reaching over to the fire he raised a glowing brand, twirled it dextrously till it broke into a small flame, and raised it so that he could look full into her face. She winced away a little and obviously wished with all her might that she could cover her face from his sight. For she was scarlet with shame and pride and rage. That pride kept her from turning away; that rage made her drop a trembling hand on her gun.

"Van Dyck," she said furiously, and her voice shook like the voice of a fighting-mad man, "I've pulled my gun for less things than this."

"But you can't make your draw on me?" he queried. "That sounds pretty good for me, doesn't it?"

She was silent.

"I s'pose," he went on, "that in the whole world there ain't nothing you hate half so much as you hate me."

"Stranger," she said, "you must be reading my mind."

"Sure," he said, "I have been for some time."

His voice changed and grew deeply serious.

"And now, tell me why it ain't possible for us to make a team, Jack? I been talkin' foolish, but I just wanted to get you worked up enough to begin really thinking about me. But look at the two of us! Here I am just about the same as outlawed. Here you are with every man, woman, and child in Double Bend afraid to sit down by you."

"Why can't we hit the trail together and run north? No, I don't mean double harness or anything like that. I mean travel like man with man. We'll hit new country where we ain't new. You'll get a chance to forget that fool cross, and I'll get a chance to live without fighting for a week or two. Shake on it?"

He stretched a broad palm beside the fire toward her, and he saw the instinctive jerk of her arm to meet his gesture. He held his hand patiently. At last he withdrew it with a sigh.

"Think it over," he said quietly, "I don't want you to make up your mind too quick."

Still no answer.

And then, suddenly, so that he stared where he sat and narrowed his eyes to peer at her, she said: "Van Dyck, are you talking as man to man or as man to woman?"

The solemnity of it took his breath. The light answer tumbled to his lips and fell heavily back again. She was sitting very straight, and he could make out the glow of her eyes as they reflected the firelight.

"If it's man to man, you'll go with me, Jack?"

"Right! Tell me straight, Van Dyck," she said.

And the truth came up to his lips. It came and formed itself in words, surprising the speaker more than she who listened.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

Sannigan's Jag



by Victor Lauriston

I.

SANNIGAN was an exceedingly careful man—when he was sober. He was demonstratively good natured when drunk.

To comprehend Sannigan you had to go back to his parents. Sannigan, sober, took after his mother, a kindly but careful Scotch woman, who did good because the Bible told her to, and counted the pennies because her husband spent the pounds in periodical celebrations.

Sannigan's boisterous Irish father looked on the wine when it was red, and on the beer when it foamed, and repented afterward in the slowly sobering company of whatever swine had helped him get drunk. Sannigan, drunk, was his father all over again.

But Sannigan, after he married Rose Marie, was for a long time steadily sober. Rose Marie had taken him for better or for worse with a mental reservation to see to it personally that it was for better. To this end she made Sannigan quit drilling in the oil field and buy a little farm outside Millbury, where they raised garden truck, sugar beets, tobacco, and an increasing number of lively little tads.

On top of all this, Ontario was captured by the Camel Corps. Sannigan's stamping grounds were drier than the seven brass

doors of Hades, as old Captain Kibosh aptly put it. Under the new regime the old-time bars dispensed kickless slush, and bootlegger booze cost twenty dollars a quart plus a month in jail plus (quite frequently) an indeterminate period in hospital plus (occasionally) a trip to the cemetery*without return ticket.

So it befell that Sannigan forgot his thirst, except when the days were very hot or very cold, trod the straight and narrow path, dressed Rose Marie like a queen and the little tads like princes and princesses, and saved money.

On a certain afternoon that was to be memorable, Patrick Sannigan hitched up his bay mare, Hazel Dawn, to drive to town. He waved good-by to Rose Marie, whose confidence in him had been already confirmed by many a safe return.

In the rural mail-box at the gate, Sannigan found a letter. The letter contained a beet check amounting to five hundred dollars. That, Sannigan mused, would pay the taxes, and buy the Victrola Rose Marie wanted, and leave money to boot.

Sannigan's first careful impulse was to turn back and hand the check to Rose Marie, who looked after money matters.

Then he changed his mind. He was late as it was. The check was payable to Patrick Sannigan. When he got to Millbury he would be just in time to deposit the

money to their joint account in the Millbury Savings.

The sight of the little town recalled distant but happy days to Sannigan—days when he was a driller and the oil boom was at its height. He waved his hand to Dandy Curle. Many a time he and Dandy had draped their forms over the same bar—but never again for Patrick Sannigan!

Black Dan Moshier shambled along—a good fellow, Black Dan, if he would just buck up and let rot-gut whisky alone. Sannigan heard the birds sing, recalled bygone jags with fond pleasure that he had enjoyed them, and without regret that they were no more—and was glad for the sake of Rose Marie, and the tads, and for his own sake, and for the sake of his mare, Hazel Dawn, that he had quit, forever and forever.

He got sentimental about it, in his musings, till the sight of the Commercial Bank recalled him to business. Though Sannigan kept his money in the Millbury Savings, the beet check was drawn on the Commercial.

A business man would simply have deposited the check in his own bank, and let the bank do the rest. Not so the Ontario farmer, as any banker will testify. The farmer cashes the check at the bank on which it is drawn, and deposits the money.

Thus Sannigan set out to do. Inspired by his maternal heritage of Scotch caution, he did more. He sat down at a table in the Commercial lobby, carefully counted the bills, and methodically penciled down the denomination and number of each in his note-book, down to the bunch of Dominion of Canada dollar notes.

Going out, he met Ben Crabb, who had come in from the drilling camp north of Mervyl to look after some casing. Sauvey, Crabb told him, had fired Dandy Curle the week before; but most of the boys were still working for Sauvey.

As he stood gossiping with Crabb, Sannigan felt something strange and remote creep into his blood. He was a bit frightened. He tried to think of Rose Marie and the tads, but all he could think of was a wonderful, delirious three-day jag Ben Crabb and he had once enjoyed together.

"Say, Ben," he muttered weakly, "you ain't got a nip on your hip?"

Ben hadn't.

Sannigan was momentarily glad.

"Dandy Curle was a pretty good scout," he said, trying to talk and think of something else but that bygone jag. "If it hadn't been for that infernal temper of his—always flying off the handle—"

In the old days, mused Sannigan, he could have invited Ben, and Dandy, too, into the nearest moisture emporium and regaled them with a gin rickey or a tall glass of cool foam.

"Say, Ben," he faltered, "isn't there some place where I can get a nip—just a thimbleful to wet my throat?"

Ben regarded him regretfully.

"You hustle right home," he urged. "That's the best thing for you." For, like nearly everybody else, Crabb liked Sannigan, and was reluctant to see him hit the toboggan—and then there was Rose Marie to consider, and the youngsters.

"Just a drop, Ben?" moaned Sannigan.

Ben persuaded him into his buggy, but Sannigan refused to go home. His long dormant thirst burned him up. Crabb regarded him dubiously.

"See here," he said at last, "if I do give you a little nip, will you go straight home?"

Sannigan swore, by the nine gods and the seven devils and all the saints of the calendar.

Ben took him down an alley, and produced a small flask. Sannigan drank with anticipatory pleasure—and realized disgust.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Grape juice?"

"It's a native wine," explained Ben. "Now, don't whisper a word, but hustle straight home."

"A' right," agreed Sannigan. "Just 's soon 's I put this five hundred in the bank." And he climbed out of the buggy and headed for the Millbury Savings, pursued by Crabb's dubious stare.

"They ain't got nothing but slush, nowadays," reflected Sannigan. Then he ran into Dandy Curle.

"Say, Dandy," he whispered, edging close, "you ain't got a nip on you?"

Dandy eyed him queerly.

"No," he retorted, "I ain't. You'd best go home, Pat."

"A' right," agreed Sannigan. "Just 's soon 's I put this roll in the bank."

But on the threshold of the Millbury Savings he decided he would go in after he had got just a teeny-weeny nip. So he strayed up and down, buttonholing first one crony then another. The absence of kick in Ben Crabb's innocuous stuff had merely stimulated a long-forgotten thirst.

Fred Collins was dry, and blamed glad of it. Black Dan Moshier had nothing to offer. Harry Peterson told Sannigan to hustle home while it was yet time. Everybody was full of good advice. Sannigan realized keenly that Ontario was a desert.

Just then a complete stranger beckoned him to one side. He was a dark man with a furtive eye.

"What you ought to do," advised the furtive-eyed stranger, "is to go fishing. I got a fishing-line I'll sell you for twenty dollars. You fish in the pond back of the slaughter-house and you'll catch a whale." He winked.

Sannigan understood. He peeled a twenty-dollar bill from the top of his wad, and took the meager line. He found his way back to the pond, and fished along the edges. Betimes he felt a tug. He pulled hard, and a black bottle emerged, attached to a skein of tangled wire. To remove the cork was the work of an instant.

Sannigan took one pull—two pulls—three—and a huge, engulfing, soul-satisfying swig to cap the climax.

Then came the jag.

II.

To this day, Millbury folks still speak with awe of Sannigan's immortal jag.

In all Millbury's history never had such a jag been recorded.

But in all Millbury's history, never had such miraculous contact been established as when the insides of the "whale" went trickling and tumbling down Sannigan's throat.

It was not whisky, that liquor; it was not gin; it was nothing ever before known in the calendar of Bacchus. Product of a moonshine still, concocted by an untaught

genius, of ingredients never before mobilized for the service of thirsty man, it possessed a perfection of kick to which the greatest distillers in all the centuries had aspired in vain.

It was the outstanding accidental achievement of ten thousand years.

Add the further accident that it fell into the eager hands and seeped and trickled and poured down the thirsty throat of Patrick Sannigan.

Sannigan's thirst grew by what it fed on. He sipped, he gulped, he swallowed in ever-increasing drafts—he could not down the heavenly nectar fast enough.

He stood up. His head touched the clouds, his feet trod an airy carpet.

"Hey, Dandy Curle," he bellowed. "Come here and drown your sorrows."

No response. Dandy was half a mile away. Sannigan sought him. He thought, too, of Ben Crabb.

"Native wine! Phew!" he exclaimed. Then he raised his voice in accents of pure joy. "I'm a prohibitionist!" yelled Sannigan. "Pin a white ribbon on me, Rose Marie. Never got a kick like that under license! Hooray for the Camel Corps!"

As he turned into Main Street, a red fire-alarm box caught Sannigan's eye. He pulled the handle.

Three minutes later the fire department came thundering down the street, and gazed eagerly about, seeking direction. But Sannigan, headed the opposite way, had passed them. He sought another fire alarm, and found the doors of the fire-hall invitingly open. He ambled in. He petted the spare horse, and tried to give it a drink. The horse kicked, and Sannigan desisted. But he found the fire chief's pipe, filled it from the assistant foreman's tobacco pouch, lit up—and took another swig.

People gazed askance at Sannigan as, puffing at the fire chief's pipe, and brandishing his black bottle, he marched gaily down the middle of Main Street singing "It's a long, long way to Tipperary."

It was, he decided. He must have a car. He climbed into a flivver parked at the curb, and pushed first one lever, then another. Then he thought of the self-starter. To his bewilderment the car began to back.

"Whoa, Hazel Dawn!" he shouted. "Whoa, there!"

But the car was no obedient, jogging mare. It did not know its master's voice. So with Sannigan aboard it went on backing down the street.

"He's got a six-shooter!" some one whispered hoarsely; and the derisive crowd of a moment before hiked for cover.

Sannigan grew impatient at the car's obstinacy; also thirsty.

"Oh, have it your own sweet way," he ejaculated good-naturedly; and, leaving the car to steer itself, took another swig.

The car crashed into a telephone pole and stalled. Sannigan, agreeably surprised, climbed out. He had left the fire chief's pipe behind, but he still toted the bottle.

"Hey, there, Ben Crabb," he roared, "throw away that slush of yours and take a nip of concentrated kick." He caught Ben and fondled him lovingly, while Ben, conscience-stricken, tried vainly to cajole him into going home.

"I got lots of money," declared Sannigan. "Rose Marie don't need to take in washing. The tads don't need to take in washing. Hazel Dawn, my mare, she don't need to take in washing." His eye fell on a store window. "Hey, you music-box man," he shouted, "send out a music-box to Rose Marie. Best music-box you got. I'll pay for it. Put the 'Tipperary' record on it."

He left Crabb, and went his way, chanting. Then he decided Rose Marie must have a new dress; but the dressmaker saw him coming and barred the door.

"I guess it's a holiday in town," mused Sannigan, discomfited. "Let's celebrate." He sat down on the curb and nursed his bottle a while under the vague impression that it was one of the tads.

His head nodded. It was bedtime. Rose Marie had often insisted on a bath before bedtime. He got up, staggering, glanced about, and plunged into Miller's horse-trough.

The cold water sobered him a trifle; so did the noses of two horses whose drinking activities his plunge had interrupted.

He glimpsed a fire-alarm box—the fire-alarm box.

He climbed out, dripping, and pulled the handle. Then he remembered he had to bank some money. He took one more swig, tipping the bottle far back. "Ah-h-h!" he gurgled.

He drained the bottle, gripped its neck with both hands, flung it high in the air.

"Whoopee!" he yelled.

From somewhere a long way off came a tremendous crash.

Sannigan was hazily conscious that Main Street was strangely deserted. Could this, indeed, be Main Street? He went up and down, trying the doors, finding them locked and barred. Frightened faces peered out at him. He thought he saw a bluecoat dodge around a corner as he appeared.

"This ain't Main Street," he moaned. "I got to get back to Main Street. I got to bank my money."

He wandered aimlessly down a side street, his head nodding again. At last he found the secluded shelter of the storm porch of the A. M. E. church. A church porch looked like a good, safe place to spend the night. He felt his wallet. It was still fat with bills. Then he fell down, and started snoring, and dreamed that he was listening to a temperance sermon, and Rose Marie was pinching him to keep him awake.

III.

SANNIGAN, waking from his jag, felt as he had never felt before.

"My stars!" he gasped. "I sure must have been drunk!"

Yesterday he had gone to heaven, as he pictured heaven; this morning he woke in the other place. Yes, and St. Peter must have flung him over the battlements—and his head, assuredly, had hit the cinders, for it still buzzed.

"Yes, I *was* drunk."

Then he corrected himself.

"No, I wasn't *drunk*—I was—I was—"

He found no word in his vocabulary to describe his experience. He had attained new heights in intoxication. And, this morning after, he had hit new depths. He was the Commodore Peary and the Roald Amundsen of the jag. He had found the north pole of human satisfaction and ex-

hilaration—and now he had located the south pole of human reaction.

But he was sober, so his Scotch mother sent his hand to his wallet—to find it empty.

The bills were gone.

Sannigan cogitated.

"Ben Crabb took my money," he adjudicated.

For Ben Crabb was the only man who had come near him. Ben Crabb was the man who had given him the original nip to start him going. Ben Crabb was the one man who knew from the first that he packed a wad.

He dare not confront Rose Marie with the story of his loss on top of the story of his jag. There was just one thing to do. He must have Crabb arrested at once, and get back the money. He went direct to Magistrate McColl, J. P.

"Oh, so, here you are!" ejaculated McColl.

This McColl was a character in Millbury. He was town magistrate, and had been for thirty years. He was an old man with gray eyes that saw clear through Sannigan and sent a shiver into his soul, and thin lips that never smiled.

"Well, there are three policemen looking for you right now," added McColl.

"Send them after Ben Crabb," urged Sannigan.

With which he told his story, or as much of it as he could remember. McColl studied the note-book, with the numbers of the bank-notes. He gazed grimly at Sannigan.

"You careful, methodical—damn fool!" he said simply.

Then he telephoned, calling in the policemen, who were glad to see the culprit they sought already in custody, and tragically sobered. The magistrate sent Chief Wiggins himself for Ben Crabb. Crabb came; and Crabb, challenged with the theft, produced an emphatic denial, and showed a pronounced eagerness to be searched. The search revealed a scattering of small change, a tobacco pouch, and a black pipe.

"Get out," said McColl; and Crabb got.

"Ain't you goin' to jail him?" demanded Sannigan belligerently.

"You fool!" McColl, J. P., withered him with a look. "Who sold you the booze?"

"I never saw the man before, judge."

"Waugh!" snorted the magistrate exasperated. "That's just the same old story." But Sannigan insisted on it with a sincerity almost convincing.

"Well," said McColl at last, "I guess you've lost your roll. If we can't find that mysterious stranger we can't find the money. Serve you right, too."

Sannigan got up, blubbering. All the joy had gone out of his jag. He saw nothing in it now but the supreme foolishness it was—and, after so many happy years, to go home to Rose Marie and the tads with such a story. He bumped blindly into the door-jamb.

"Here," demanded McColl, "where are you going?"

"Home."

"Nothing of the sort, my fine fellow. Not this side of seven years, if you get your deserts. Put him in the cooler!" roared the magistrate to Chief Wiggins. "I'll settle his hash at eight o'clock."

Toward 6 P.M. the police chief brought Sannigan a copy of the Carisford evening paper. Here was more shame for him. In flaring type he perused by patient syllables the whole hideous story of his jag. The paper had turned Charley Alliston loose on the yarn and given him a free hand; and what Charley didn't know, and couldn't find out from Millbury, he had invented. Sannigan groaned.

Then his eye lit.

"Well, it was one fine jag, anyway," he philosophized. "Even Black Dan Moshier couldn't put on such a jag."

But his philosophy carried no real comfort. He had lost his five hundred dollars beyond recall—and on top of that, if McColl spoke the truth, it might be seven years before he went home to Rose Marie and the tads—and when he got out, soon or late, he would have to face Rose Marie, which was worse still.

IV.

WITH such advertising, the Millbury police-court session that evening drew a huge

crowd. The blue-kalsomined court-room above the fire-hall was jammed to the doors.

County Prosecutor McAllum had stayed over from Division court to handle the case. That was an added attraction. Sannigan paled at sight of the slick lawyer with his merciless blue eyes and his smart mustache. McAllum had a reputation for getting a lot of fun out of drunks, and of getting convictions and sentences, too.

But Sannigan's Scotch and Irish were both combative. He gazed again at McAllum, and some of the instinctive fear went out of him.

He pleaded not guilty.

The crowd gasped, and McAllum's pale eyes gleamed. He manifestly enjoyed the prospect of creating a good laugh.

As first witness for the prosecution, McAllum called the fire chief. Then he called Ben Crabb. Then he called Fred Collins, the owner of the flivver. He called Grocer Miller, who from the windows of his store had witnessed the bath in the horse-trough. Man after man, McAllum filled the box with a cloud of witnesses; and the evidence of each witness from start to finish was a roar of laughter.

The crowd had come to laugh, and it laughed. The merriment made McColl, J. P., exceedingly testy.

"If this unseemly conduct is repeated," he announced in chill tones, "I shall clear the court."

But he did not.

"Is your case closed?" he at last asked McAllum.

"It is, your honor."

"Evidence for the defense?" demanded McColl peremptorily.

Sannigan went into the box, and was sworn.

"I was not drunk," he testified.

"How do you know?" cross-questioned McAllum.

"I've been drunk many's the time," retorted Sannigan, "and it was never like that."

"Then what were you?"

"I wish I knew," moaned Sannigan, "so I could order another of the same."

The crowd roared and hooted.

"Silence!" thundered the magistrate in a voice that made his auditors jump. "The next man who laughs will be fined fifty dollars and sent to the cells for contempt."

The bursting crowd kept a restrained silence after that till its sides ached with repressed mirth.

"Now, this bath?" McAllum pursued his cross-questioning. "Is a horse-trough a good place to wash your sins away?"

"You ought to know, sir."

The crowd with difficulty maintained a sort of choking silence.

"Oh, you think you're funny!" McAllum's tone was impatient.

"I, sir? Oh, no." Sannigan was enjoying the moment, though in the back of his mind the thought of that lost five hundred dollars loomed hauntingly.

"When you got into the horse-trough," pursued McAllum, "how did the horses act?"

Sannigan gazed questioningly at the magistrate.

"Y'r honor, have I got to answer that?"

McColl's icy eye showed a faint blue twinkle like the glint of sun on an iceberg.

"Answer the question."

"Well," said Sannigan, in a clear, confidential tone, "the big black horse just snorted, but the little gray mare, she says to me, she says, 'Pat Sannigan, you're gettin' to smell worse'n a Carisford lawyer.'"

The crowd could hold itself no longer. It must laugh or burst—and it laughed. It roared. It guffawed. It hooted.

Magistrate McColl looked the court-room over with icy eyes that this time could not awe the mirth.

"Wiggins," he commanded, "lock the door."

It was done.

"I mean," pursued the magistrate, "to teach you all that my court is no barroom. I intend to impose summary punishment on each and every man who laughed."

There was a contagious shudder. For every man had laughed, every man knew he had laughed, and every man knew McColl knew he had laughed.

And there was no escaping McColl, and

McColl could impose what sentence he saw fit when a culprit was in contempt. Ten dollars fine, or fifty dollars, or a month in jail, or two months. Faces whitened.

"One dollar fine, each," ruled McColl.

There was a huge sigh of relief. Not so bad, the crowd seemed to feel; the evening's entertainment was worth the price.

"Form in line there, gentlemen," commanded Wiggins. "Don't crowd." A couple of constables looked after the cue, and with eagle eyes saw to it that no guilty man escaped. Chief Wiggins opened his record of convictions, but McColl interposed:

"I can't wait all night to finish this other case, Wiggins, while you're filling in those names with a pen. Take each man's particulars on a slip of paper and pin it to his money."

The chief did so.

"Not a bad day's takings," he whispered to McAllum. "We'll have to put on another Sannigan performance. Four hundred and seventeen dollars—oh, boys!"

"That's enough," barked McColl. He peremptorily remanded Sannigan till next morning; and dismissed court.

V.

MAGISTRATE MCCOLL patiently counted the money. There were a few fives and twos in the pile with the accompanying slips bunched, and there was a little silver, but the pile of one-dollar bills was portentous, just the same.

Presently McColl jotted down a couple of names on a slip of paper.

"Bring these men," he told Wiggins.

The magistrate turned to Sannigan, still waiting, and looked him up and down.

"Well," he said, in a tone that seared the culprit, "you are Patrick Sannigan, and a very great man. You have a good wife who helps you earn and save money, and is trying to keep your immortal soul out of Hades, and—you come to town and forget all about decency and fill yourself with rotten whisky and—and make an ass of yourself. Yes, a bigger ass than you were born." So, in quiet, conversational, yet biting tones he tongue-lashed the crushed, remorseful Sannigan, till Sannigan in his inmost soul vowed that never, never

again would he taste anything moister than talcum powder. In came Wiggins just then with Black Dan Moshier and Dandy Curle.

"Oh!" said McColl, in that compelling tone of his; and gazed challengingly at the bewildered couple. "Here," he added crisply, "are two one-dollar bills. Where is the rest of Sannigan's money?"

Dandy Curle kept his end up nobly. But Black Dan, a weaker vessel, gasped as he realized how he had been caught; then began to blurt out the truth. In frantic haste to get from under he thrust a hand into his pocket and plumped down a wad of bills.

"There it is, y'r honor," he mumbled. "Dandy, here, he gave me the money to keep for him."

Dandy's temper soared like a rocket.

"You infernal liar, we went fifty-fifty, and that's your share."

But Wiggins was already going through Curle's pockets. "I have it," he announced; and checked over the numbers of the bills. "Every cent," he said at last.

"That means," concluded McColl crisply, "that you two men got the twenty dollars Sannigan paid for the booze. Which of you was the mysterious stranger with the fishing-line—or did you have a third man as a go-between? Oh, you don't need to tell if you don't want to. I can't make you tell. But I can send you to the cooler overnight to reflect upon it."

Chief Wiggins took them down-stairs.

He came back presently. McColl still sat ruminating upon the crushed and humbled but contrite Sannigan. To look at him the keenest observer would not have suspected him of possessing any heart whatever; his eyes were cold and his face was set like granite.

But presently that blue iceberg twinkle flickered into a corner of one eye.

"Wiggins," he said unemotionally, "I remit all those fines imposed for contempt. They have served their purpose. Hand back the money when the men call for it."

"And Sannigan?" asked Wiggins.

"Hand him his money," adjudicated McColl. "Only, deduct ten dollars fine, and costs. There's not a collection agency in the world would have got him back the money for so low a commission."

The Son of the Red God



by
Paul L. Anderson

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

DURING the summer of 1911 the present writer was conducting certain archeological investigations in the Dordogne valley, and found, in a newly opened cave, a pile of skins which had been parchmented and which bore strange markings that suggested, by their regularity and by the repetition of the figures, that they might constitute a written record. By dint of several years of close and patient application a translation was arrived at, when the record was found to be far more valuable—from an archeological and ethnological standpoint—than had been supposed possible, since it was no less than an account, by a chieftain of a tribe of the great Crô-Magnon race, of the beginning of that vast racial replacement whereby the Crô-Magnons, for thousands of years the dominant race of Europe, first left their original home in the southern Hima-layas and spread over western Europe, exterminating the former inhabitants of the country, the Neanderthal race.

This replacement, beginning in early Aurignacian times (about twenty-five thousand years ago) was one of the tremendous events in the development of humanity, and it has been suggested that some portions of the record might be of general interest. Accordingly, the present writer has prepared the following excerpt from the Crô-Magnon's manuscript, and offers it to the public.

It will, of course, be understood that the excessively archaic—almost monosyllabic—language of the prehistoric author has been modernized throughout.

CHAPTER I.

THE SACRIFICE.

GO summon En-ro, the Carver of Tusks. He is the strongest among the tribesmen of the Ta-an."

The speaker was Men-ko, High Priest of the People of the Mountain Caves, and the priest to whom he spoke bowed, turned, and went swiftly down the long slope of the mountain, the group of skin-clad tribesmen who watched from a little distance parting to let him through.

The messenger bowed curtly as they sa-

luted him with respect, then hurried on, and disappeared in the forest far below. Presently he returned, and with him came En-ro, a man of perhaps twenty-two years, tall and straight and strong, whose wide shoulders, long limbs and muscular figure proclaimed him powerful and swift in war and in the hunt, and whose broad, high forehead, square chin and aquiline features showed him a man of high intelligence, even among the Ta-an, themselves no mean people.

The Carver of Tusks was a warrior, as was to be seen by the weapons he carried, and that he was an artist as well was shown

by the exquisite carving and shaping of those same tools.

His ax, the flint head bound to the wooden shaft by thongs of deer-hide, bore at the end a little knob to keep the hand from slipping, and this knob was fashioned in the form of a bear; his throwing-stick, with shaft of wood and cup of bone, was decorated with outline drawings of mammoth, lion, and hyena, and the knob at the end was in the form of a bat, feared and worshiped by the Ta-an, who called it the Devil of the Air.

The young man was naked save for a girdle of lion's hide, into which was thrust his flint dagger, and for a leopard-skin quiver over his shoulder, to hold his darts; his ax and throwing-stick he carried in his hands.

One who knew the customs of the Ta-an might recognize En-ro for an artist by another sign as well, for his hands were unmutilated. When each boy of the tribe came to the age of fifteen he was taken before the priests, his station in the tribe, whether artist, priest, chieftain, hunter or other was determined, and one or more of his fingers—but never the thumb—solemnly cut off at the first or middle joint; artists only kept the hands entire.

So the Carver of Tusks climbed the mountain, the priest at his side trotting and panting in the effort to keep up with the young man's long, unhurried strides, and as the pair drew near the group of tribesmen parted again to give them passage, a murmur of respectful admiration following the most famous artist of the Ta-an.

En-ro came up to the priests and bowed to Men-ko with deference, yet with something of hostility showing in his eyes.

"I am here," he said.

"En-ro," spoke the High Priest, "it is known to you that the time of the Great Hunt is drawing close, that the beasts must be slain to furnish food through the winter, that the flesh of sheep and wild ass must be dried in the sun to keep the tribesmen when the snow lies deep on the ground and the wind bites hard and we may not leave the caves. Also, do you know that the priests of Ta-an have labored long and hard to build the altar of the Great Hunt here on

the roof of the world, that sacrifice may be made to bring us favor in the eyes of O-Ma-Ken, Great Father of the People of the Mountain Caves.

"But the last—the very last—of the chosen stones is held by two others, so that we cannot move it. You are the strongest of all the tribesmen; try now to move the stone. Much honor, and the favor of the Great Father shall be yours if you can loosen the stone."

En-ro smiled, a little scornfully.

"Men-ko," he said, "much honor have I already, more than any other among the Ta-an, save only yourself and Snorr, the Chieftain. Nevertheless, for the favor of the Great Father, I will try."

He turned to the stone, looked carefully at it on all sides, then laid aside his weapons, and, bending over, placed his hands beneath the rock.

Once, twice, and again he heaved, and the muscles of his arms and back and legs started out like twisting ropes, but still the stone lay fixed. Panting, the sweat trickling down his face, En-ro straightened up and looked again at the stone, while the priests shook their heads mournfully—bad fortune was sure to follow if one of the chosen stones was abandoned. But as the Carver of Tusks gazed in thought there came to him a vague, half-erased memory of something he had once seen while hunting.

Suddenly he grunted, turned from the rock, lifted his stone ax, and walked quickly down the mountain to the edge of the forest, where he cut down a young tree, a sapling, a little thicker than his arm, trimmed off the branches, and returned, the priests looking at him in wonder. Thrusting one end—the larger end—of his lever under the rock, he placed his shoulder beneath the other end and lifted.

The sapling bent and crackled, but the great rock quivered, stirred and lifted, and with a shout the priests sprang forward and turned it over, tearing it from the place where it had lain wedged, while the tribesmen, amazed at the new and strange tool invented by the artist before their very eyes, set up a cry:

"Great is En-ro, the Carver of Tusks! Great and wise and skilled and strong!"

En-ro picked up his weapons from the ground and watched the priests as they rolled and lifted and placed the stone he had conquered, while beside him Ko, one of the older priests, weary from his labor, stood and watched also.

"Tell me, Ko," said En-ro at length, "what is the sacrifice to be? The Ta-an have no captives, taken in battle, nor is there among us any who has broken the laws of the tribe. Where, then, is the victim? Surely the Ta-an will not court the wrath of the Greatest One by offering him less than a man!"

The priest did not answer, and En-ro repeated his question, whereupon Ko grunted, shook his head, and replied:

"Go ask of Snorr, the Chieftain."

En-ro, his curiosity aroused by this evasion, thought a minute and saying:

"That will I do!" turned and strode down the mountain toward Snorr's cave. Straight down the slope he walked, for a mile or more, till he reached the edge of the forest, then turned sharp to the right, and continued along a level stretch for another mile, till he came within sight of the cave where the Great Chieftain lived.

Suddenly, as En-ro was nearing the cave, a man stepped out from the forest on his left and a little ahead of him. En-ro dropped quickly out of sight and hid behind a boulder, for he had recognized Meng, the Bison, giant chief of a tribe of negroes who, wandering from their own country far to the south, had taken up their home on the mountain slopes and in the foot-hills and valleys where lived the Ta-an.

A huge man was Meng, tall even among the Ta-an, and far taller than any other among his own people, heavy-shouldered as the beast from which he took his name, his whole body covered with a thick black fell, almost a fur.

His forehead was low and slanted sharply back from his heavy eyebrows, his nose was broad and flat, his jaw protruding, his lips thick and heavy, his whole look evil and forbidding; nor was his ugliness less for the maze of scars that covered his face and chest and arms and thighs, marks of the fight in which Meng, his ax and dagger broken, had slain with his bare hands the

great cave-leopard, whose skin now hung about the negro's loins.

He stooped slightly from the hips as he walked; and this, together with his hairy body and the great length of his arms, had caused the maidens of the Ta-an to nickname him "the Ape-man," a name that none of the warriors of the tribe cared to use, for Meng was terrible in battle.

En-ro scowled as he saw the Bison, for Meng was suitor for the hand of Va-m'rai, the Swift Runner, Snorr's daughter, whom the Carver of Tusks also loved and meant to have as his wife.

Meng, En-ro saw, carried a load on his shoulders, wrapped in a skin, and this he laid down a few yards from where En-ro crouched, grunting and chuckling as he undid the skin and sorted over the contents.

En-ro peered over the top of the boulder and saw that the Bison, stooping down, offered his broad back as a fair mark, and the young warrior, hatred in his soul, drew a dart from his quiver and fitted it to the cup of his throwing-stick. He raised it to his ear, his forefinger and thumb steadying the dart, and hold it poised; then lowered it, shaking his head; he could not slay an enemy from behind.

Before a month was past En-ro was to wish and wish again that he had hurled the dart, but for the present the Bison was safe—the young man could not read the future—and slowly and reluctantly the Carver of Tusks placed the dart back in his quiver and sank down in his hiding-place.

Presently the Bison took up his load and went on to Snorr's cave, En-ro slipping along behind him from rock to rock, silent as the shadow of some great bird, for no other of the tribe could move so quietly over rocks or through the forest as the warrior-artist.

At length Meng came to where the Great Chieftain sat warming himself in the sun before his home, and the Carver of Tusks drew nearer and nearer till he could hear their words, and could hear also the cracking and crunching from the flat table-rock to one side, where Snorr's wife, A-ai, the Dawn, and his daughter, Va-m'rai, were breaking and pounding bones that the sweet marrow might easily be sucked out.

Meng stopped before Snorr and laid down his pack, then, stooping, drew with his finger in the dust the three interlocking propitiatory circles, without which none might speak to the Great Chief.

Snorr looked at the mark in the dust and at Meng, then grunted and waved his hand, and the Bison sat down. After a few moments' respectful silence the Bison spoke, and En-ro heard him say:

"Oh, Snorr, Great Chief, I come to ask your daughter, Va-m'rai in marriage."

"No!" exclaimed Snorr. "You cannot have her."

"I bring gifts."

"No!"

"Rich gifts."

"No!"

"Look, Great Chief!" And Meng, opening his pack, spread out his gifts: darts and lance-heads, shells brought by the traders, the Little Hairy-Men from the Land of the Dying Son, skins of wild beasts, and even—strong magic, won only by great daring—the dried form of one of the furry, leather-winged Devils of the Air.

Snorr barely glanced at these gifts, rich enough to buy a dozen ordinary women, but shook his head, repeating "No!" and Meng, bowing, gathered his offering together, and, his face twisted with rage, took his way down the slope, passing close to the rock where En-ro, his teeth showing in an angry grin, lay gripping tight the haft of his flint ax.

The Bison was no sooner out of sight in the forest than En-ro, unseen by Snorr, slipped back from rock to rock till he in turn reached the woods, and then, his former errand forgotten, ran to his cave, where he seized something from a ledge of stone, and took his way once more, this time openly, to the Great Chief's home.

In turn the Carver of Tusks bowed before Snorr and drew in the dust, and in turn seated himself before the chieftain as Snorr waved his hand.

"Oh, Snorr, Great Chief," he said, "long have I loved your daughter, Va-m'rai, the Swift Runner, fairest of all the maidens of the Ta-an, and I come to ask her in marriage. I do not come empty-handed, but bring a gift—"

"One gift?" Snorr asked.

"One gift, but a gift that any of the tribesmen might envy you. Look, Great Chief!"

And En-ro lifted the little roll of skin he had taken from his cave, and laid it reverently at Snorr's feet. Snorr said nothing, but gazed thoughtfully past the suitor's head to where, across the wide valley, the distant hills met the sky, and it seemed to En-ro that he could read sorrow and regret on the face of the Great Chieftain.

At length Snorr raised the gift and carefully unwrapped the skin, and his eyes shone, for he held a little statuette two palms' breadth in height, carved with long and patient labor from a piece of ivory, the figure of a woman, young and slim, the star on her forehead marking her for the wife of O-Ma-Ken, Great Father of the tribe of Ta-an.

"The Star-Marked One!" he whispered, gazing with reverence at the little figure.

"True, Great Chief, the Star-Marked One. Seven months have I labored to carve this form, having traded with the Little Hairy Men for the fairest piece of the tooth of Do-m'rai, the Hill That Walks; seven long months, using my best skill, and adding thereto my prayers, that the bride of the Greatest One might bring me my bride. Is the price good?"

Snorr looked long at the figure, turning it from side to side, his eyes gleaming and his breath coming fast, but at last he wrapped it again in the skin and laid it down.

"Oh, Carver of Tusks," said Snorr, "this is indeed a gift worth far more than the flints, the shells, and skins the Bison offered, a gift that might purchase many women; never before have you wrought so skilfully, nor has any of the Ta-an carved so well. Take then the figure, and buy yourself another maiden, for never can the Swift Runner be your bride. And fortunate, indeed, shall be the one in whose cave the Star-Marked One shall rest. Good fortune shall be his in battle and in the hunt, in love and in war; rich food and a soft bed, through many years. If you had come sooner!"

"Va-m'rai is then promised to another?"

"Not to you, nor to Meng, nor to any

man, neither of the Ta-an or of another tribe, can she be given."

"She is destined to the gods?"

"You may ask, but I may not answer. When the time is ripe, then shall you and all the tribesmen know; but till then I may not speak." And Snorr waved his hand.

En-ro got to his feet and took the little parcel, erased the circles he had drawn in the dust, bowed, and turned away, his brown eyes troubled and his forehead knotted beneath the thick mass of unkempt hair. As he turned he looked toward Va-m'rai, and swiftly and secretly she made a sign he knew, the signal that called him to meet her at dusk under a certain tree far down the mountain.

He nodded and went on, looking back to see Snorr, his cloak of lion's hide drawn close about his shoulders—for autumn was coming, and the air was cool in the high hills—still sitting and gazing at the distant mountains that reared their crests through the blue haze, a long day's journey to the south.

That evening, as the sun was sliding down behind the hills, the Carver of Tusks took his way to the great pine where he and Va-m'rai had so often met. It grew on the edge of a deep ravine, and since the girl had not yet come, En-ro flung himself down to watch the path along which she must travel. Ten times the height of a tall man the cliff fell away in a sheer drop to where, at the bottom of the ravine, a noisy brook tumbled over the stones.

It was still light under the tree, but in the depths of the ravine the shadows were gathering, and En-ro shuddered as he heard, far down the mountain, the deep, earth-shaking, hunting roar of Snorr-m'rai-no, the Fear That Walks the Night, and saw in the growing dusk below him the flutter and swoop of the leather-winged Devils of the Air.

Presently, far down the ravine, he saw the white form of Va-m'rai hurrying along the path beside the brook, and he settled himself to wait, for he knew that she would have to pass beneath him, climb the path that led up the face of the cliff, turn, and come back to where he lay.

So the young warrior lay watching his

sweetheart as she drew nearer, but suddenly she stopped, and En-ro, looking closely, could see a dark form blocking her way, a form that he knew for the Bison's, and he leaped to his feet to go to the girl's help, for he guessed why Meng was there. But even as he stood upright there was a struggle, a swift whirl of two forms, one white and one black, the girl's arm flashed, once, twice, and the giant fell.

Instantly the girl leaped over the fallen body and fled along the path toward her lover, and En-ro, watching, saw three dark forms in pursuit; Meng had not come alone.

But Va-m'rai was not called the Swift Runner for nothing, and En-ro saw the distance between her and her pursuers widen slowly, and he knew the negroes could not overtake the flying girl. At length two gave over and returned to their chief, and as the third still came on En-ro lifted a great stone, larger than his head, poised it carefully, and when the negro was almost beneath him he hurled it. Full and square and true, right where the neck and shoulder join, the great rock struck the negro—he fell as though struck by a thunderbolt—and the chase was over.

The young warrior hurried down the path to meet the girl, who, stumbling, panting, staggered into his arms, and as he held her he saw that her right arm was red with blood and spots and splashes of blood marked her white body.

"Va-m'rai!" he cried, frightened. "Are you wounded? Where?" And he looked anxiously for the hurt. But the girl, leaning back against his arm, her hands on his shoulder, shook her head.

"Not—mine!" she gasped. "The Bison's." And as she felt her lover's muscles tighten in anger, "Wait!"

Presently her trembling grew fainter and her breath came more easily, and she seated herself on the earth, her lover beside her.

"Meng stopped me," she said, "and asked me to go with him, to be his wife, and when I scorned him he seized my arm and tried to drag me, but I snatched the dagger from his belt and struck him with it and fled."

"I saw! I saw!" cried En-ro. "Indeed and indeed, Va-m'rai, for strength and cour-

age you are fit mate for a warrior of the Ta-an. But is the Bison slain?"

She shook her head.

"But wounded. And now we have his vengeance to fear as well."

"We need not fear the Bison. You have but to tell the tribesmen, and they will hunt down and slay the man who dared to raise his hand against a chieftain's daughter of the Ta-an."

"Indeed, Carver of Tusks, my love, there is more than the Bison to fear. Last night Men-ko, the High Priest, came to the cave of Snorr and talked long with my father. I could not hear what they said—too far was I, and feared to go nearer—but they looked often toward me, and I saw my father bow his head in his hands."

"You think, then, that Men-ko has claimed you for the sacrifice? Would your father give you?"

"What can a tribesman do, even the Great Chief, when the gods call? Can he refuse, though they demand his own child?"

"It is true that the great Sacrifice of the Hunt is at hand," said En-ro thoughtfully. "The altar was finished to-day. And it is true also that Snorr refused gifts of great value, both from me and from the Bison, and, though he might refuse the Bison because he is black of skin and evil of soul, he could have no reason to deny me."

"That makes it sure. Oh, my love, and we had thought to spend so many happy years together. But if the gods call, what can we mortals do? But it is hard to say good-by. And it is hard to die when life has just begun. En-ro, my love"—and she clung about his neck and looked wistfully into his eyes—"En-ro, my love, will you think sometimes of me in future years, when another woman has my place at your side, after my soul is with the gods and my body has been thrown to the wild beasts?"

The young warrior shuddered and ground his teeth and clasped the girl in his arms, then sprang to his feet and shook his fists at the sky.

"It shall not be!" he cried. "Not though I tear the altar in pieces with my own hands! It is not the gods who call for you! Could the Star-Marked One see lovers wrenched apart? It is but the priests. Oh,

Greatest One, that I should have helped to build the altar! And Men-ko hates me because I have more honor in the tribe than his son; he has claimed you to strike through you at me. But you shall not die on the altar! Let me think."

"But what can we do? If the priests claim me for the sacrifice we two cannot stand against the whole tribe of the Ta-an!"

En-ro seated himself again on the earth and drew the girl close to him, his arm about her shoulders, and her warm, young body pressed against his own. Her head was thrown back against his arm, and her eyes looked into his; her long, brown hair fell in waves about them both, and he felt her sweet breath against his cheek. At last he spoke.

"Listen, Va-m'rai," he said. "When I bargained with the Little Hairy Man for the tooth of Do-m'rai, that I might carve the figure of the Star-Marked One, to him I showed still other figures that I had carved, daggers and ax-heads that I had chipped from flint, and the tools I had made for my carving."

"He said to me then that great honor awaited me in the Land of the Dying Sun; that none among his people could carve the tooth of Do-m'rai or chip the flint so skillfully as I, and he asked me to return with him."

"I but laughed and refused, for I thought that long life and great honor and happiness would be mine among the Ta-an. But now—but now, if Men-ko seeks you for the altar, why shall we not go together? Indeed, I think the Little Hairy Man spoke truth, for the flints he and his mates carry are but poor things beside my own."

"Oh, Carver of Tusks, it is a long journey to the Land of the Dying Sun."

"Not so long a journey as into the Long Dark."

"And a perilous one."

"More perilous than to stay?"

"No-o. But to live always among the Little Hairy Men."

"I shall be there with you."

The girl flung her arms around her lover's neck and kissed him full on the lips, then leaped to her feet, saying:

"Come; we will go."

"Not yet, Swift Runner. First must I go to my cave for my weapons; we cannot start with empty hands—there are beasts to bar the way, and food we must have on the journey. You must spend this night in your father's cave, and to-morrow we will slip away to the Land of the Dying Sun—and I cannot leave the Star-Marked One; she will bring us good fortune on the journey and in our new home."

"But En-ro, my love, if they take me to-night? You know the victim must pass seven days and seven nights in the Cave of Purification, and the altar waits!"

"I think they will not take you to-night. The priests are weary from their labors, and they will sleep and rest; none will wish to guard the cave, and I think they will wait until to-morrow night—and we shall be gone."

"I am afraid! Could I not wait here till you return with ax and throwing-stick and darts?"

"The Fear That Walks the Night is abroad."

"I could sleep in the tree; there are many wide branches."

"The Devils of the Air are abroad; I have heard the flutter of their wings."

The girl shuddered and clung to her lover.

"Oh!" she cried, "not that! Not that! Better the altar on the mountain-top and by body to the wild beasts. I will return to my father's cave. But—but—oh, Carver of Tusks, kiss me once again. And if I am not at the tree to-morrow at dusk—if I am guarded in the Cave of Purification; if my soul goes to the gods from the great altar—En-ro, you will not forget Va-m'rai?"

The young man kissed and soothed the frightened, trembling girl.

"Va-m'rai, by the Greatest One, Great Father of the tribe of the Ta-an, I swear no harm shall come nigh you," he said. "I will take you from the very altar, from the hands of the priests, if need be, and if I cannot—if I should fail—then by the Star-Marked One, the friend of lovers, I swear that my soul shall follow your into the Long Dark!"

And he kissed her again, while she clung to him, weeping, like a child who wakes in the night.

"Now come," said En-ro at length. "We must return. Be at this spot when again the sun sinks behind the hills, and we will either make our way to the Land of the Dying Sun or else, perhaps, live by ourselves in the forest, as did Snorr, your father, when first he took A-ai from the Forest People."

So hand in hand the young man and the girl took their way down the path and through the ravine. Once they stopped while En-ro turned over the body of the negro he had crushed with the rock, to make sure that the man was dead, and they passed on, turning as they left the ravine and walking along the side of the hill toward the homes of the Ta-an, the Mountain Cave People. Presently they stepped from the forest to the open space about the caves, and as they did so a voice cried:

"Found! Found! Here is the victim!" and there came a rush of feet, and shouts arose:

"To the Cave! To the Cave of Purification! The victim to the Cave! Let her not escape!"

And the two were assailed on all sides by scores of tribesmen and priests, who tore Va-m'rai from her lover's grasp and hurried her away up the slope of the mountain, struggling with all her might, screaming, biting, striking—useless.

Again and again En-ro was flung back, fighting savagely, and the crowd swept over him; he was unarmed. Cut, stabbed, bruised, beaten with clubs, torn and breathless, he lay on the ground, and the crowd trampled him as he lay, and even as his senses left him the last thing he heard was Va-m'rai's despairing cry: "En-ro! Save me! Save—" Cut short by the splintering crash as the huge rock rolled into place, closing against all hope the mouth of the terrible, the fatal Cave of Purification.

CHAPTER II.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

WHEN the Carver of Tusks came to himself again the big, round, yellow moon was setting, and he knew that the dawn was near. The chill of the night had

stopped the flow of blood from his wounds, but he was stiff and sore and lame.

He tried to get to his feet, to stand up, but could not, and he lay quiet, listening to the far-off howl of the hunting wolves, Menzono, the Slayers, and he wondered dully why they had not smelled him out and finished what the Ta-an had begun.

Slowly memory came back, and with it the thought of Va-m'rai in the Cave of Purification, and again he tried desperately to rise.

This time he got to his hands and knees, and crawled some fifty yards to a little spring of clear water that bubbled out from between two rocks, where he drank deeply once and again, then plunged his head and arms into the basin.

The sting of the cold water cleared his mind and braced his shaking limbs, and with the help of a stout stick he found lying by the spring he got to his feet and staggered off toward his cave, a mile or more away. He passed many of the caves of the tribesmen, and heard from within the grunts and snores of the sleepers, and far up the mountain he could make out, black in the moonlight, the form of the priest who guarded the cave where Va-m'rai was held prisoner.

At length En-ro got to his home, the cave where he lived alone—his mother had died years before, in the Great Famine, and his father had been killed a few months back, in a fight with En-mai-sun-so, the Beast That Wears a Horn on His Nose—and here the Carver of Tusks dropped on his bed of leaves, drew his skin covers closely about him, and lay staring at the roof of the cave.

Through the long day he lay there, now burning with fever, now shivering with cold, but always thinking, thinking, turning over in his mind plan after plan to free the Swift Runner. He could hear the voices of the tribesmen as they passed to and fro, the calls of the women at their work, the cries of the children playing on the long, level bench of rock that lay below the caves; at times some one would pass the mouth of his cave and glance quickly in, but none entered to bring him aid, and En-ro knew well the reason—he had raised

his hand against the priests, and was accursed.

He thought bitterly of Men-ko's promise that he should have great honor for moving the altar-stone, then brought his mind back to Va-m'rai and her danger, grateful for the law that would hold her seven days and seven nights in the Cave of Purification—before that time he would be well and strong!

Toward evening he rose, threw off his covers, went to the carcass of a sheep which lay on the stone shelf, cut off a chunk of meat, and, squatting at the mouth of the cave, tore the raw flesh in pieces with his strong teeth, gulping it down in great lumps and gobbets.

His hunger satisfied, he took his staff and went to the spring, where he drank deeply, returning again to his cave, the men and women—even the children, who generally crowded about him when he went abroad—drawing aside and staring silently at him as he passed. Back in his cave once more, he lay down, and, wrapping himself in his skins, was instantly asleep.

So passed the next day and the next, but on the fourth En-ro gathered together all his possessions, his ax and daggers of flint, his carving tools, his throwing-stick and darts, his skins—one lion's hide, three of the cave-leopard, and one of Menzono, the Slayer, all beasts that he himself had killed—and, not forgetting the ivory figure of the Star-Marked One, took his way with his load toward the forest.

Silently the tribesmen watched him go, none raising a hand to stop him, either in love or in anger, for he was outcast and accursed.

At the edge of the woods he stopped, turned, and looked back at the long row of caves, which, some higher, some lower, pierced the slope of the great mountain, at the level bench that lay below them, with forms of men and women and children passing back and forth along it, or gathered in groups for work or chat or play.

Above the caves rose the naked side of the mountain, and En-ro could make out the Cave of Purification, the priest guarding it, his arms folded, his skin gleaming yellow in the late afternoon sunlight.

The Carver of Tusks gazed sadly at the busy and happy scene—happy but for one poor girl—and his heart was heavy as he thought that never again would he be part of it; never again would he clasp the hand of one of the Ta-an in friendship; his cave would be sealed up, his name forgotten, and he himself an exile in the Land of the Dying Sun, living his life out among the Little Hairy Men whom he despised, or else drifting in the forest, alone but for his bride, living in danger of terrible, savage beasts by day, and by night dreading not only the hunting beasts, but also—and far more terrible than any beast—the spirits and fiends of the dark, the Blind White Wolf, larger than any three ordinary wolves, that moves silently on feet of air; the Faceless Man, who hides behind trees to leap on one's back; and, most frightful of all, the Invisible Thing, never seen, never heard, and known only when its claws fasten on one's shoulders and its long, sharp, curved teeth in one's throat.

So En-ro took his way into the deep forest, leaving behind the home and friends he had always known. He walked for three or four miles, then chose a large oak tree, with spreading limbs, dropped his pack beneath it, and climbed the trunk, cutting toe-holds in the bark with his ax as he climbed.

Reaching the thick branches, he pulled two together, twisting the ends to fasten them, then tore smaller branches and wove them in and out between the two till he had made a rude platform two or three feet wide and about eight feet long. He then clambered down and came back with his load, carrying it fastened to his shoulders by a twisted strand of a vine, and opened the pack, taking a skin to wrap himself in and a piece of sheep's flesh for food. After eating, he rolled in the skin, put the bundle under his head, his weapons at his side, and stretched out on his rude platform to sleep, uneasily and brokenly, dreaming much, and groaning and tossing as he dreamed.

In one of his dreams he thought Men-ko, the High Priest, had ordered him sacrificed on the Great Altar, and the priests were holding him down; one of them sitting on

him to quiet his struggles; he tried to writhe away, but could not move; he tried to scream, but no sound came; Men-ko was drawing nearer, an evil grin on his face, and En-ro could see the gleaming knife of flint gripped in the priest's right hand.

Gasping, he woke—and lay still. On his body rested a huge venomous snake, its green and glistening body shining in a ray of moonlight that filtered through the trees, its villainous, lance-shaped head an arm's length or less from his face, its beady eyes blazing like dark stars into his own.

En-ro felt his scalp tingle and prickle as the hair rose like the hackles of Menzono's neck when he sees a foe, and the sweat started in little beads from the roots of his hair; the weight of the reptile's body, thick as a warrior's arm, and more than twice as long, was crushing the breath from his lungs, and the horror of its loathsome presence froze his blood—he could feel his hands and feet grow cold.

He knew his end had come; one move, one struggle, and those deadly fangs, freighted with poison, would sink in his flesh—a few minutes of agony, frightful beyond belief, and his swollen body, black and distorted, would lie rotting in the forest, shunned by bird and beast alike.

But, after all, it would be a relief to journey into the Long Dark; life held but little for an outcast from the tribe; he would be spared much struggle, much suffering—the Long Dark.

Where had he last heard those words? Va-m'rai—he had promised—oh, Great Father! And En-ro gathered his forces; his brain grew clear. Could any man escape the Fanged Death, so close? Could any living man move more swiftly than that terrible head? No!

But he must try. Some slight movement of his body alarmed the snake, which raised its head and thrust out its forked, quick-darting tongue again and again, feeling for danger. 'Slowly, slowly, gently, cautiously, En-ro slid his hand down to his side and groped for his flint dagger, his eyes ever on those terrible, passionless eyes before him.

Slowly, slowly he drew it from his girdle; slowly, slowly he raised his arm, flexing the

muscles gently, not to alarm the snake. Full five hundred breaths he drew while raising his hand, so slowly did he move, keeping the dagger-point ever toward the snake's head—the reptile would strike toward a moving object. But even this gentle motion roused the Fanged Death, which lifted its head and weaved it from side to side, searching for danger, seeking the threat.

Back and forth, in and out of the ray of moonlight went that evil, deadly head, the black tongue playing in and out like forked lightning, the little beady eyes glistening; back and forth, back and forth, till En-ro felt himself grow dizzy from watching, and braced himself against the sodden languor that overspread him.

At last his hand, clutching the dagger, was at his shoulder; he rested a moment, steadied himself and struck; the snake felt the motion of his body, the head darted forward, too swift for eye to see, the mouth was thrown open, the fangs, grazing En-ro's hand, clicked against the flint; the sharp point, driven by the double force of the snake and of the warrior's arm, pierced the reptile's head. En-ro twisted on his side and threw off the crushing weight, and the Fanged Death, slain by a human hand, writhing, twisting, thrashing, fell down, down, tearing leaves from the branches of the tree, till it landed on the ground, forty feet below.

En-ro, sick, dizzy, shaken, limbs trembling, sweat starting from his body, lay, belly down, on the platform, his head over the edge, clutching the branches, vomiting again and again, and listening to the noise as the dying snake thrashed about among the underbrush. But after a time its struggles grew fainter and fainter, and at length ceased, the young warrior conquered the trembling of his limbs, and lay down to await the dawn.

The four days that followed were spent by En-ro in hunting. He lay in wait beside the trail that led to a water-hole, and with darts from his throwing-stick slew two wild sheep; with his flint hunting-knife he skinned and butchered them, taking only the very choicest pieces of the meat, for he dared not carry extra weight, and he made

an attempt to sun-dry some of this, hanging portions by strands of vines from the limb of a tree, that it might be safe from beasts. After all, however, it was stolen by the birds, and he gave over the effort, storing the rest of his provisions under a pile of stones.

He also added to his stock of darts, cutting straight shafts from the trees of the forest, and binding to them, with thongs from the hides of the sheep, carefully shaped and polished heads that he had brought from his cave, though he knew that the green wood, as it dried out, would warp and twist.

Still, he counted on using these darts first, saving till afterward his ones of seasoned stuff. The new darts he placed in the sun, that the raw, untamed hide might shrink, and bind the heads firmly to the shafts.

He slew a young sheep, and made a water-bag of the skin, cutting off the head and hoofs, beating the carcass with a club till the bones were broken and the flesh loosened from the skin. Then, drawing out bones and flesh and entrails, and turning the hide inside out, that he might scrape it, afterward he tried the openings in the skin with other thongs of rawhide, except the one at the neck, which was nearly closed by sewing, using an over-and-over stitch; the skin would be water-tight when the thongs hardened.

He had no time to tan this hide, to keep it soft, so he filled the bag with small stones and let it harden, afterward shaking the stones out, the bag thus keeping its open shape.

On the morning of the ninth day that Va-m'rai had been in the Cave of Purification En-ro, looking at the sky as soon as he woke, shortly after dawn, saw great banks of dark clouds gathering far down in the west. He climbed hurriedly down from his perch in the oak-tree, went to his store of meat, and hastily swallowed a few lumps of flesh. He knew instinctively, as any animal might, that with a hard day's work before him he was better off with but little in his stomach, so he rose from the ground with his hunger still only partly satisfied.

He then set about packing his few belongings, placing the new darts in his quiver, rolling the rest, except the water-bag and a small piece of meat, in the lion's skin he had brought with him to the forest; his ax and throwing-stick he, of course, carried in his hand, and his dagger in his girdle. The water-bag and meat he fastened to the outside of the pack, and then, hoisting the load to his shoulder, he set out through the forest.

He traveled hard and fast, not going directly back toward the caves of the Ta-a-i, but choosing his route so as to pass them, keeping farther down the mountain that he might not be discovered by some chance hunter and forced into a fight. Thus he made a wide circuit, climbing the mountain far to the west of the home of his tribe, and passing the homes of the Mountain Cave People a second time, but farther up the slope.

It was hard going at the higher levels, for the rocks were bare except for occasional patches of moss, and En-ro was obliged to go carefully, that he might not, by chance, be seen by some one from the tribe. He skulked along, taking advantage of every possible cover, crouching behind rocks, crawling from one to another, driven always by the need for haste.

And all the while the cloud-banks to the west were climbing, ever climbing, rolling in vast, dark-gray masses across the sky, and the sun was sliding down to meet them.

Often and often En-ro looked over his shoulder, and each time he hurried on faster and faster, for it was the custom of the Ta-an—indeed, it was the law—that the Sacrifice of the Great Hunt should take place during a thunder-storm, the first storm after the victim had spent seven days and seven nights in the Cave of Purification.

Once En-ro, peeping over a boulder, saw far below him the eleven lesser priests of the Ta-an grouped in a semicircle, the tall form of Men-ko between the horns, all tossing their arms wildly, their long hair flying, as, facing the west, they chanted the song of sacrifice. Behind them the tribesmen knelt.

The Carver of Tusks hastened on more rapidly than before, and presently came to the hiding-place he had in mind, dropping

his load and flinging himself, panting, on the rocks to rest, just as the first peal of thunder sounded from the dark clouds that now spread over more than half the sky.

Presently En-ro raised himself and peered out from his place of concealment, whose rocks rose breast-high on him as he stood erect. A few yards to the east of him, and a little down the slope, stood the Altar of the Hunt, and En-ro measured the distance with his eye carefully and noted also the rocks that lay between; there must be no misstep later.

Far down the slope to the south he could see the tribesmen in a compact body, the priests leading, slowly climbing the mountain—the first peal of thunder was their signal to start—and in the front rank Va-m'rai. He could just recognize her, and could see that her hands were tied, of course! He knew they would be. He could see her stumble, and knew that she must be weak from starvation, for the victim was given no food, but only water, while in the Cave of Purification.

En-ro crouched down again behind the rocks, made sure of his pack, laid ax and throwing-stick and darts, together with a piece of meat, on top of the pack—and waited.

It was growing dusk, for the sun had long since been hidden behind the heavy cloud-masses that now covered the entire sky, from horizon to horizon. Lightning blazed from the clouds, lighting up the scene, and as the procession, still chanting the Song of Sacrifice, swept up the mountain En-ro, peering through a crevice between the rocks of his hiding-place, could see Va-m'rai, her long brown hair flowing loose, her arms held by two young priests, looking anxiously from side to side for help or for some sign of relenting.

The thunder was now rolling continuously, it was growing darker and darker, and the lightning-bolts, flaming one after another, threw a weird, unnatural glare over the whole mountain; for an instant things were clearly seen, then shrouded in darkness that was doubly dark after the light.

Nearer and nearer climbed the sacrificial procession, till within a hundred yards of the altar the crowd halted—they might not

come closer. The priests and the victim went on till they reached the altar, and En-ro could see them busied about it, the priests chanting the while. He could not hear the words of the chant—only at times, as the rolling of thunder was lighter, could he hear their voices rising and falling in the measured cadences of the prayer.

He crouched, tense, while Va-m'rai's hands were unbound and she was stretched on the altar. It was the law that none might go before the Great Father with hands or feet bound, but, that the victim might not escape, five great stones, the under sides flattened and hollows cut in them, were used to hold the struggler down, one being placed across the throat, one over each wrist, and one over each knee.

Va-m'rai was held by the priests, and the stones were placed, and now for the first time she struggled and fought, but to no end; the priests were too strong. And now in terror she shrieked and shrieked again: "En-ro! Help! Help! En-ro, save me!" and then again, despairingly: "En-ro!" And ever the lightning flared and the thunder rolled.

At these terrified screams En-ro trembled, gripping tight the haft of his throwing-stick—but he dared not move. And still Va-m'rai shrieked, turning away her face as the High Priest came forward, holding aloft the sharp flint knife that was to tear her heart from her bosom.

And now the priests retired, almost to the waiting crowd of tribesmen, for none might be near the High Priest at the supreme instant of sacrifice. Brighter and brighter flamed the lightning, nearer and nearer rolled the thunder, and now came the swish and rush and roar of the rain, as the clouds opened and poured their torrents over the mountain.

En-ro fitted a dart to the cup of his throwing-stick and rose to his feet as the priests, turning, knelt and lifted their hands to the sky. The High Priest drew near the victim, his knife raised, and En-ro saw that Va-m'rai, rolling her head from side to side, still struggled and fought against the weights that held her fast.

En-ro raised his throwing-stick and held

it poised, and even as he started its forward sweep the whole heavens were rent apart, there came a terrific, blinding glare, a frightful shock, a stunning crash of thunder that shook the mountain beneath his feet, and the High Priest toppled forward, falling across the shrieking victim!

Instantly En-ro leaped forward, as the priests and tribesmen fell on their faces, ran to the altar, and with superhuman strength tore the stones from Va-m'rai's throat and arms and legs, lifted the girl in his arms, and ran once more to his hiding-place.

She clung to him, gasping and sobbing brokenly, and as he laid her down he felt that she trembled from head to foot, and held tight to his arm. He freed himself, caught up his pack, seized the girl's hand, and called:

"Come, Va-m'rai, Swift Runner! We must make haste! Come quickly!"

Va-m'rai rose to her feet, he helped her from the hiding-place, and, still holding hands, the two started back along the ridge of the mountain, in the direction from which En-ro had come.

The rain was falling less heavily now, and the thunder was passing away, rolling farther and farther off with each succeeding minute. From time to time En-ro stopped to listen anxiously, and at last, after such a pause, he grasped Va-m'rai's hand tighter and said:

"Hasten! Hasten! They have found him!" And he ran on faster than ever, half dragging, half carrying the girl.

"Found—whom?" she panted. "And why—do—the Ta-an—cry—the hunting call?"

"Men-ko!" he answered. "Hurry!" And they continued their flight, leaping and scrambling from rock to rock, splashing through pools left by the rain, bruising themselves in the darkness, slipping, falling, rising, ever hurrying, hurrying along the crest of the mountain, the thunder rolling farther and farther off, and the cries of the tribesmen growing fainter and fainter as they were left behind.

At last En-ro turned down the slope, and after another mile or so the fugitives plunged into the forest, and the going was easier. True, they were hampered by the

underbrush, and from time to time one or the other ran violently against a tree, with a breath-taking shock, but En-ro had that morning blazed the trees with his ax as he passed, and they could follow the line of white marks that gleamed faintly in the dark woods.

At times some beast crashed through the brush, startled by the sound of human beings, but for the most part the only noises were those made by the man and girl, or the quiet drip—drip—drip of water from the leaves. All night long they traveled, far past the spot where En-ro had made his sleeping-place in the old oak tree—and the clear dawn found them, leg-weary, bruised, scratched by low-swinging branches, but many miles from the caves of the Ta-an.

While still on the mountain En-ro had given the girl a lump of meat, which she had carried in one hand, tearing pieces from it with her teeth and swallowing them as she ran, but now in the morning light they sat down beside a little stream and ate their fill, afterward lifting water from the brook in their hands to drink.

While they ate En-ro looked about him and saw that they were in a little glade, some fifty paces across, with long, rich grass covering the ground and bending over the edge of the stream. Rushes grew in the shallow places, and he could see many fish playing, or—the large ones—moving lazily about in the clear water, plainly visible against the gravelly bottom.

The character of the forest had changed, for there were more of the soft woods, and fewer, hardly any, pines or firs, and wild flowers made patches of bright color in the grass. One tall tamarack tree grew at the edge of the open space, towering above the maples and willows, and En-ro, finishing his piece of meat, climbed this and looked about over the forest.

Far to the north he could see the hills from which they had come, and far to the south another range, and he knew—as indeed he had realized during the night—that they had left the slopes, and were now on the floor of the broad valley across which he had so often looked from his home on the mountain. He knew, too, having heard it from the Little Hairy Men, that

they must cross this valley, climb the farther mountain, then down a slope far longer than the one they had traveled, and then, turning west, make for the Land of the Dying Sun.

After many days' journey they would come in sight of the Great Blue Water, and, following along the shore, at length reach the new home they sought, where honor awaited an artist and craftsman.

For a long time he looked, choosing with practiced eye the easiest route, and fixing the direction in his mind, then climbed down, to find Va-m'rai, worn out with the journey and sodden with sleep, nodding beside the stream, her hands clasped about her knees, and her long hair, wet and dark and lustrous from the rain, matted about her shoulders.

He shook her gently by the arm and she raised her head and blinked at him, then smiled.

"Get up, Va-m'rai," he said. "We may not sleep here; it is no safe place."

"I can go no farther," she answered, rising stiffly. "Oh, Carver of Tusks, I can indeed go no farther!" And she tottered where she stood, from utter weariness, clutching her lover's arm to steady herself. En-ro looked at her doubtfully.

"Indeed, Swift Runner," he said, "I think you speak the truth! Well, we will rest here, but not on the ground." And he turned to a tree, climbed it, pulled two branches together, and wattled small branches and withes between them till he had made a platform. In the meantime Va-m'rai had spread out the skins, laying them on bushes to dry in the sun, which was warm and comforting, and had climbed the tree to help in making the resting-place.

When it was finished En-ro climbed down and got the skins and other things he had carried and returned. He spread a lion's skin on the platform, the two lay down in each other's arms, pulled the rest of the skins over them, and were instantly asleep.

The sun was setting when the Carver of Tusks awoke, waking instantly as does a healthy animal, and he shook Va-m'rai, who sat up and looked about for a moment, puzzled, then remembered where she was.

Her lover kissed her, and she responded,

her arms about his neck, and he climbed to the ground, she following. They ate more of their store of meat, with berries pulled from the bushes, drank from the stream, and En-ro seated himself on the ground to watch while Va-m'rai combed her tangled hair with her fingers. After a time the girl spoke:

"Carver of Tusks, why did the Ta-an cry the hunting-call? Did they see you take me from the altar?"

"I do not know," he answered. "But I think they cried the hunting-call because they found the body of Men-ko, and knew or thought that I had slain him."

Va-m'rai left off combing her hair, sat up straight, and looked at her lover with wide eyes.

"They thought you slew him! But—but—was he not slain by the lightning?"

En-ro shook his head. Gradually an expression of horror came over Va-m'rai's face.

"You slew the High Priest?"

En-ro nodded.

"With a dart from my throwing-stick," he said, and the girl shrank away from him, looking at him with fear in her eyes.

"But—" she whispered, "but—that is sacrilege! To slay the High Priest at the altar! You will be accursed!"

En-ro shrugged his shoulders.

"Could I see you die?" he asked, and Va-m'rai turned away and looked in the water. Finally she turned to him again, and in her face admiration and love struggled with horror.

"You did that for me? You dared? Oh, En-ro, my love!" And she flung her arms about his neck and kissed him. "If you are accursed of the gods so too am I, for I will share your lot, forever and ever!"

And she kissed him again and again, and laid her cheek against his, while he clasped her tight. After a time the Carver of Tusks rose and lifted the girl, and they climbed to their place of safety in the tree, wrapped themselves in the skins, and lay down once more, and once more they slept.

As the dawn was gilding the tree-tops, and while the deep shadows still shrouded the floor of the forest, En-ro woke, rose,

stretched, and prepared to descend the tree, but suddenly he stopped—he had heard something coming through the forest. At first he took it for a wild beast, but as the noise came nearer and nearer he realized that it was made by men; he could even guess roughly that there were about ten or twelve.

He shook Va-m'rai awake and grasped his weapons, and together they listened to the rustling of the undergrowth. From time to time he could catch the sound of a voice, but could not make out the words. Tense and alert, the two peered down into the little clearing, and Va-m'rai whispered:

"Is it the Ta-an?"

"I cannot tell," answered the young warrior. "Wait!"

Soon the footsteps were at the edge of the glade, and dark forms came into view. En-ro counted them silently; one, two, three, up to eleven, and as they strode into the light, which was growing stronger, he ground his teeth and his hand tightened about the haft of his ax till the knuckles showed white—the leader of the negroes was Meng!

En-ro heard a gasp behind him, felt his arm clutched, and turned to see Va-m'rai staring down, mingled fear and loathing on her face. He laid a finger on her lips and she looked up at him, then nodded and pulled herself together.

The negroes spread over the little glade, speaking in subdued voices, which, however, carried to the listeners in the tree, and En-ro could make out the words, though they spoke in their own tongue, for he had some knowledge of their language. He whispered to Va-m'rai what they were saying, and it was clear that Meng, hearing of the rescue and flight, had got together a party of warriors and had set out to overtake the fugitives, to find and kill En-ro, and keep the girl.

The two crouched low on the little platform, hiding themselves as best they might. They knew they would be found, and that soon, but with the instinct of the hunted animal they put off the evil moment as long as they could; they would fight, but in the meantime something might happen—one never knows. The hunters might be scat-

tered by a rhinoceros or by a herd of bison, they might get to fighting among themselves—one can never tell!

Lying on the platform and peering through the leaves, the artist and the girl saw Meng and his warriors, bending close to the ground, questing back and forth like hounds that have lost the scent, searching for the tale told by the prints in the long grass. They saw the negroes follow the tracks into the glade, find the place where the two had rested by the brook, pick up the trail there and follow it to the foot of the tree, and back again to the bank of the stream.

From time to time one or another of the hunters dropped on all fours and sniffed at the grass, and at last the band came to a halt under the tree whence En-ro and Va-m'rai watched.

They spoke together for an instant, then Meng, thrusting the haft of his ax through his girdle and casting his spear on the ground, set himself to climb. En-ro picked up his throwing-stick, fitted a dart to the cup, and waited.

Higher and higher climbed the giant negro, nearer and nearer, and still En-ro waited, tense, his nostrils quivering. Soon Meng was on a level with the platform, and En-ro rose to his feet with a fierce, deep-throated roar. He swept the throwing-stick forward—the haft snapped in two—the dart flew far over Meng's head—a ferocious yell of exultation broke from the waiting negroes—and En-ro dropped flat on the platform barely in time to escape a storm of darts that whistled and snapped through the branches of the oak.

Meng climbed and slid to the ground, and spoke briefly to his men, and he evidently had changed his plan, for the negroes spread out and began to climb the oak and nearby trees, making a circle about the quarry.

Helpless, En-ro and Va-m'rai watched as the negroes climbed about them and closed in on all sides, and the Carver of Tusks knew that they meant to take him alive. Nearer and nearer came the hunters, crawling out on the limbs of the other trees, till at a cry from their leader they dropped together on the little platform, and En-ro, ax

in his right hand and dagger in his left, leaped to his feet to meet the rush.

Then followed a desperate fight. En-ro with ax and dagger, Va-m'rai with skinning-knife, struggled, struck, bit, kicked, clawed, fought with hands and feet, with weapon and teeth and fist—but in silence, for the Ta-an uttered no sound in battle.

But the negroes! Yells and curses tore the silence of the little glade, screams and groans of agony, the crash and thud as falling bodies smashed through the branches to the ground, the panting of breathless men, the creak as the boughs of the oak sagged and bent and sprang under the weight of the stamping, surging fighters.

En-ro struck but once with his ax before the attackers pressed too close for him to swing—but the negro plunged headlong to the earth, his chest crushed by the terrific blow. Va-m'rai stooped under an upraised arm and stabbed another in the belly, and he too fell, clutching one of his fellows and carrying him to death. En-ro jabbed his fist in Meng's face and the Bison staggered backward, tripped, and fell, whirling over and over till he hung, head on one side and feet on the other, belly down, across a branch twenty feet below.

Again and again En-ro was borne down by weight of numbers, but ever he struggled to his feet and fought, blinded by the blood running into his eyes, half stunned by the blow that had laid open his scalp from front to back, till at last a negro, leaping on him from behind, clasped his legs around En-ro's body, pinning his arms to his sides and throwing him face down on the branches.

Instantly three others seized him and tied his hands and feet with rawhide thongs, and at the same moment Va-m'rai, stunned by a blow from a fist that landed full on the back of her neck, was seized and tied, and the fight was over.

The fugitives were quickly lowered from the tree, and their feet unbound, hobbles arranged so that they could walk with short steps, and Va-m'rai was revived by water thrown on her face.

While this was going on En-ro counted with satisfaction seven negroes stretched on the grass, dead or writhing in agony, but

his satisfaction was short, for he and the girl were jerked roughly to their feet, turned in the direction from which they had come, and jabbed in the back with spears as a signal to march.

CHAPTER III.

EN-RO MEETS THE RED GOD.

HIS ankles hobbled with thongs of hide so that he could move only with short, tottering steps or in standing jumps, En-ro squatted on his haunches under a spreading pine and chipped flints into lanceheads and daggers, while his guard, a tall, muscular negro, watched from a few yards off, leaning against a tree and eying the captive white man as the Fear That Walks the Night eyes a fat buck on which he is about to spring.

Half-consciously, the Carver of Tusks felt contempt for the rude, poorly chipped ax the negro carried, so different from his own beautifully finished tools, but this was no more than a passing thought—his mind was too full of other matters.

Indeed, he was doing his forced labor with no more than half his ordinary attention—almost automatically—for his body ached and his brain whirled with rage and grief.

Hot fits of anger, when all grew red before him, alternated with cold fits of fear—not for himself; no warrior of the Ta-an feared to die! His skin was covered with half-healed wounds from the lances of the negroes who had prodded him along, and his muscles ached from the blows he had received in battle and in captivity, but worse than this, far worse than any mere bodily pain, was the thought of Va-m'rai, captive like himself, and destined to the arms of Meng, the Bison, while he, En-ro, her lover and betrothed, sat chipping flints, a slave to the negro chieftain.

About him the great forest closed in, its giant trees shutting off the view in all directions, while between the near-by trunks he could now and again catch sight of dark forms wandering idly about, and could hear the voices of the negroes as they chatted carelessly together.

From time to time one or another would come and stand watching him, exchanging a few words with his guard, who clearly felt his own importance; was he not there to see that the white warrior-artist kept at his work? And then the guard, to prove his power and consequence, would kick the white man, strike him with a stick, or spit upon him, while the others laughed.

So En-ro squatted, as he had done for the past five days, knowing that unless he could free Va-m'rai before Meng's wounds were healed they might give up all hope. Plan after plan, scheme after scheme he had turned over in his mind, watching always for the chance that did not come.

Among the flints that lay, unshaped, in a pile beside him, En-ro saw one that was almost a perfect dagger, that would need but little chipping—indeed, it might be used just as it was, and En-ro meant to take that one next, when he had finished the one he was working on. By now it was growing dusk, and soon the woman would be coming with his food.

En-ro looked up as a step sounded faintly near at hand, and his guard turned his head to see who was coming. Quick as a striking snake, the artist's hand shot out, caught the unshaped flint and flung it behind him, and as the guard turned back he saw the captive hard at work once more.

It was growing too dark to work, though, and as the woman came with the food En-ro gave over his labors, ate the raw flesh, and held out his hands for the bonds that were placed on him at night. The guard then tied him to the pine tree, and the two lay down to rest.

Almost at once the negro was asleep, but the Carver of Tusks lay staring upward into the darkness till long after all sounds had died out in the camp save only the grunts and snores of his guard. He heard the soft pad-pad of small beasts, the distant roar of Snorr-m'rai-no, and once the frightened squawk of agony as some bird of the night fastened beak and talon in his prey.

Through an opening in the tree-tops En-ro could see a bright star, and he said to himself that when the star reached the center of the open space he would act. So

he forced himself to lie quiet while the star moved slowly across the sky, and at length, when the time had come, he rose gently, cautiously, to his feet, and took the rough flint he had seized from the pile that afternoon—he had taken care, without seeming to do so, to lie down on the rude dagger when his guard had tied him to the tree.

Carefully, noiselessly, with the flint in both hands, he cut the thongs that bound him to the tree, then those that held his feet. He then held the flint between his feet and sawed his handcuffs back and forth across it till he was free. He stepped across the soft earth to his sleeping guard, bent over the negro, who lay on his back with wide-flung arms, and with one fierce stroke—no lighter for the kicks and blows of the past week—he drove the dagger into the body of the unconscious man.

There followed a single, convulsive plunge of the dark form, one gasping sob, and the negro was dead, and En-ro, taking his ax and lance, slid like a ghost among the trees.

He had but a vague idea, caught from the chatter of his many visitors, of where he would find Va-m'rai, but he set out to look for her, treading silently on the carpet of dry pine-needles, and avoiding the dark bodies that lay stretched in sleep on the ground all about. He felt utter contempt as he saw how carelessly the negroes lay down wherever night found them.

"No wonder," he thought, "that Snorr-m'rai-no takes heavy toll of these fools! Why, even the beasts know better than to sleep unhidden on the ground!"

Presently, down a little forest aisle, he caught a glimpse of something white, and turned that way. It was Va-m'rai, sleeping under a tree, and now En-ro went even more cautiously than before, stooping feet testing the ground before him that no cracking twig might sound an alarm, nostrils spread wide to catch any faintest scent, every muscle and nerve tense and ready to spring, eyes and ears alert.

The girl was bound and tethered as he had been, and was guarded by three negroes, and En-ro smiled scornfully as he saw that they too were asleep—"Fine guards!" he thought. "A warrior of the

Ta-an who slept on guard would surely die!"

He stepped over them and cut Va-m'rai's bonds, the slight touch waking the girl, who sat up with a little cry.

"Quiet!" whispered En-ro, then helped her to her feet, for she was stiff and lame from being tied. She clung to him, breathing fast with excitement, and he kissed her, then hand in hand they stepped carefully over the sleeping guards and disappeared in the forest.

Dawn found them many miles from the negroes' camp. They had traveled hard, had waded for more than a mile up a running stream, and at last, climbing a low hill on whose rocky ledges they left no trail, had come to a small cave, hidden among trees. Here they gathered dry leaves for a bed and for covering, and lay down to sleep. When they woke the sun was sinking toward the edge of the world, and En-ro, rising, stretched himself and yawned.

"I must seek food," he said. "My belly cries out within me!" and Va-m'rai answered:

"I, too, will go."

"Nay, keep hidden and wait my return; there may be peril," said En-ro, but Va-m'rai put her arm about his shoulder and whispered:

"Let me go, my love! It is long that we have not been together, and what is peril to the daughter of a chieftain of the Ta-an?"

And En-ro laughed, whereby she knew her wish was granted. They went together to a game trail En-ro had marked, leading down to a place where the brook widened into a pool. Approaching silently and against the breeze, they hid behind a screen of brush and waited.

Presently they heard, far off, the sounds of beasts coming to drink, and soon three or four bison came into view. They tramped down to the water and drank, then stood in the pool for a time, stamping, shaking their heads, and splashing. Next came a herd of wild cattle, and hard on their heels a dozen or more wild sheep, all trooping to the water-hole together.

En-ro looked the sheep over carefully and

was about to rise from where he squatted when he heard a stamping and thrashing up the trail, and a doe with a fawn appeared. The hunter's eyes gleamed and he crouched, tense and watchful. As the fawn drew opposite him he leaped to his feet and with a swift overhand motion hurled his lance.

The fawn dropped, the doe dashed forward, and instantly there was a wild stampede among the animals about the water-hole, bison, cattle, and sheep tearing madly off through the forest in blind terror.

En-ro threw the body of the fawn over his shoulder and he and Va-m'rai returned to their cave, where he skinned his kill and the two fed full on the tender flesh, then rolled stones against the mouth of the cave and lay down to sleep.

Next morning they fed, and En-ro squatted down before the cave to think, Va-m'rai sitting beside him. At length she could bear the silence no longer, and asked:

"Carver of Tusks, my love, do we start to-day for the Land of the Dying Sun?"

En-ro shook his head.

"The winter is coming on," he answered, "and we have no skins. We would die of cold. And I must make throwing-stick and darts, for Meng has mine. And no lance or ax or dagger have I, save only these foolish things I brought. And we must dry meat in the sun, to carry with us; we cannot be sure of finding game along the way."

"But you will not stop to carve your weapons with ornaments, will you? Can you not make the ones you have do till we are farther away? Let us get as far from Meng as we can!"

"I am not a fool! Time enough for carving when need does not press us so close. But weapons and tools and skins and food we must have for a long journey. And flints are plenty not far from here; I marked them as we came. Twice or three times seven days will we work, laying up stores, then start again on our journey. Meng will not find us here—we blinded our trail well."

Then for three weeks they labored hard, preparing for the long and arduous journey that lay before them, En-ro chipping flints

and making darts, a dagger, knives, and a lance. From the thigh-bone of a sheep he fashioned a cup and bound it firmly to a shaft of wood as long as his arm, for a throwing-stick. It was the custom among the Ta-an to make the stick the length of the user's forearm from elbow to finger-tip, but so skilful was En-ro in the shaping of well-balanced darts that he could use a stick much longer than most, thus gaining force and distance, still keeping accuracy.

While the Carver of Tusks was making his weapons and tools Va-m'rai was dressing hides. En-ro had lain in wait by the water-trail and had killed a sheep—the one from which he took the cup of his throwing-stick and the thongs he needed—as well as two of the wild cattle that came to drink, and a leopard that disputed a kill with him.

These hides the Swift Runner spread, hair down, on the trunk of a fallen tree, scraping from the skin all particles of flesh and fat (she used a flint En-ro shaped for her) and rubbing fat from the beasts well into the skin, then hanging them up for a few days, after which she pressed out all the grease she could with a bone-scraper, and the hide was done.

While this was going on she also dried the flesh of the sheep and one of the cattle, cutting it into strips and hanging it in the sun, and made thongs from the sinews, for such are always useful, even, in a pinch, to bind lance and dart heads to the shafts, though for this purpose raw-hide is better.

One day En-ro was splitting a flint, using another flint as a wedge, driving it with a rude hammer-stone, when Va-m'rai called him:

"Oh, Carver of Tusks, here is a task well done! Come, look!"

She was a few yards away, working over the leopard-skin, and En-ro got up from where he squatted before the cave and went to the log astride of which she sat. She had finished pressing the grease from the skin, and showed him how thoroughly she had done her work.

"Feel!" she said. "Is it not soft and clean?" and she held it up to him. He took it, bent it this way and that, squeezed it in his hands, and grunted.

"Never have I seen a better!" he re-

plied. "Indeed, Swift Runner, you, too, are a skilled craftsman in your work. No woman of the Ta-an, and but few of the men, can dress a skin as well. I could do no better myself!"

"Thanks, my lord and master!" said Va-m'rai, laughing, and she caught the skin from him, stood up, and flung it around her, drawing it close, her shining eyes looking roguishly at him above the tawny, spotted hide. En-ro swept her into his arms and kissed her again and again, while she, closing her eyes, lay at rest in his arms. At length she pushed him away, saying:

"Back to your work, Carver of Tusks, and I to mine! Time enough for kisses when we reach the Land of the Dying Sun and all danger is past!" Reluctantly En-ro turned again to his shaping of flints.

When he rose he had dropped his hammer-stone in the grass and could not lay hands on it at once, so he picked up another that would serve. He struck a few blows with it, and from it there flew a shower of sparks. Amazed, he struck again, and again the sparks flew. He called Va-m'rai, who came, and she, too, was astonished, then suddenly pointed to a pile of dry leaves near at hand.

"Look, En-ro!" she cried. "What is that?" He looked, and a red glow was eating into the leaves, a little curl of something like mist, but darker, rising from it. More and more amazed, utterly dumbfounded, the two stared, and En-ro muttered:

"What can it be? Never have I seen such a thing!"

"Is it some new, some strange, wild beast, born of the stone?"

"I do not know, Va-m'rai. Look, it is devouring the leaves! It must be some strange beast!"

And indeed the leaves were changing; from being yellow and brown they were now gray and black, shrunken and shriveled, a faint yellow glow still lurking among them. En-ro laid his fingers cautiously on the blackened leaves and jerked his hand back with a cry.

"The beast has bitten me!" he howled. And he looked at his fingers, where blisters were rising. Va-m'rai, shivering with terror, caught his hand and looked also.

"Strange!" she whispered. "It is not like the bite of any beast! Then suddenly: 'The skins! The meat! The beast will devour them!'" For all the while the red glow was spreading toward the tree where these things were hung, and yellow tongues of light were licking higher and higher, and the strange, dark-gray mist was leaping and billowing upward among the trees. Shaking with fright, the two ran wide around the new beast and caught the skins and the meat from the tree, carrying them back to the cave, where they thrust them in and crouched in terror before the opening, clasped in each other's arms, En-ro clutching tight his ax, determined to sell his life dearly should the beast turn on them.

But the strange new beast went his way down the mountain, growing stronger and bigger all the while, leaping ever higher and higher among the trees, destroying and devouring everything in his path, sending his many red and yellow tongues far above the tree-tops and lighting the dusking forest with a weird light.

A harsh, acrid smell came to the nostrils of the two, and they flinched and braced themselves as from time to time curling wisps of the dark mist drifted toward them, swirling around them and wrapping them in its folds.

So they crouched all night long, listening to the roar of the strange beast and to the crash of trees crying out in agony as the beast devoured them, watching the glow in the sky and the repeated glow on the ground where the beast lagged to finish destroying tree or bush, wondering if the beast would return for them, and waiting anxiously for the dawn. Once En-ro spoke:

"When the beast does not bite he is warm and comfortable, warmer than skins, warmer even than yourself, Va-m'rai." But Va-m'rai did not answer; she only shuddered and drew closer to her lover, and stared out into the forest.

When morning came the beast had disappeared save only where he lurked near the ground, finishing his meal, and En-ro and Va-m'rai, with the growing light, stepped out to see what they could learn. A hundred yards or so down the slope lay a

wide brook, and here the beast had stopped; beyond it the forest stood fresh and green. And an equal distance to their right this same brook, turning, had halted his march.

To the left, and above them as well, the beast had not gone, and here, too, the forest was unharmed. But in the space between! Not a tree was left standing save as a blackened stump, not a bush was to be seen, not a leaf nor a plant of any sort; all was black desolation, with here and there a red glow in the trunk of a tree, where the beast had not quite finished his terrible work.

Long and silently En-ro looked out over the ruin, then shook his head and whispered:

"Va-m'rai, this is no beast. Look! Do-m'rai himself, the Hill That Walks, could not have wrought such destruction. See where stood that great pine! Could any beast have destroyed it so utterly? He has devoured everything! No, this is no beast; it is—" and his voice fell lower still as, awestruck and reverent, he whispered: "it is a god!"

Va-m'rai, her left arm about his shoulder, her right hand clasping his, her eyes following his pointing finger, whispered in a shaking voice:

"The Red God!"

All the rest of the day En-ro sat thoughtful before the cave, and would not speak. When Va-m'rai asked questions he only grunted impatiently, till at last she feared that he had sickened from the bite of the strange god, and queried:

"En-ro, are you sick? Do you feel pain?" But he only shook his head.

"What is it, my love? Have I angered you?" And she knelt beside him, but he shook his head again and snapped:

"Be quiet! I wish to think." And when night came he lay down to rest, still wrapped in his unaccustomed silence.

Early the next morning he rose and, going to the mouth of the cave, looked about till he found the hammer-stone he had been using when the Red God was born. Va-m'rai watched him curiously, but said nothing, and by and by he turned to her and spoke:

"I am going to try if I can bring the Red God to life again," he said. The girl looked at him in horror; she was sure his mind was gone—probably the terrible experience had turned his brain and he would be like Ken-so-man of the Ta-an, whom all feared and shunned. But she hid the sick fear that filled her heart and spoke gently:

"Bring the Red God to life again?" And she managed a twisted smile. "Have you not seen Him enough? Look about you!"

"Do you remember that He was warm, when not too near? And that He lives on wood and leaves, but does not eat the rocks? I am going to try to make Him my slave!"

And now Va-m'rai was sure her lover was insane, and she sank down in despair on the ground and drew the leopard-skin over her head and wept.

En-ro took the hammer-stone and a flint and turned away through the woods, skirting around the burned part till he came to the stream that had stopped the Red God. He climbed up on a great flat rock and in fear and trembling struck the flint with the hammer-stone, a shower of sparks following the blow. A dozen times he did this, then sat and thought a while, summoning his courage for the next step.

Laying aside the stones, he climbed down and gathered a handful of dry leaves, spread them on the rocks, and again struck sparks. The fourth time a red glow appeared on one of the leaves, and a little curl of smoke drifted and swirled upward.

En-ro shrank back, but watched eagerly as the Red God devoured the leaves, and once more he tried. This time he dared hold out his hand toward the pile, and found it warm; he laid the ends of his fingers on the leaves and jerked his arm back with a yell—the Red God had bitten him again; and Va-m'rai heard the yell and shuddered where she crouched.

He found a stick, held the tip among the burning leaves, and a yellow tongue licked up from it. Again and again he tried, lighting a small heap of leaves, feeding the Red God with fresh leaves, twigs, branches of the trees, laying stones on it, blowing on it, spitting on it, carrying water from the brook to pour on it, relighting it, scat-

tering earth on it; trying every possible food, and trying everything he could think of to slay the god.

He climbed down from the rock, cleared a space on the earth, and brought the Red God to life there.

All day long he labored; beasts peeped at him through the leaves and from behind bushes, but he paid them no heed; the sun rose high in the heavens and sank again in the west, but still he strove and thought and studied and experimented, till as dusk drew its shadows through the forest he returned again to the cave, where Va-m'rai still crouched, the skin still drawn over her head.

He did not speak to her, but took a piece of meat, squatted with it before the cave, and ate it, still sunk in thought, his mantle of abstraction still wrapped about him.

Presently he slept, but with the first gray of dawn he was on foot, hurrying back to the rock dike, carrying flint and hammer-stone. All that day and all the next he toiled and studied, paying no heed to Va-m'rai, who went about her duties listlessly—what was the use of preparing for a journey if En-ro was mad?—and returning to the cave only to sleep.

But about the middle of the afternoon of the third day he was satisfied, he had learned what he wished to know, he threw water on the heap of brush before him, and rose to his feet, flung out his arms, and in a deep, full-throated roar that carried to the ears of Va-m'rai where she toiled over her dressing of hides he shouted:

"Victory! Victory! The Red God is slave to En-ro of the tribe of Ta-an!"

Taking flint and hammer-stone he returned to the cave, flung his arms about Va-m'rai, and hugged her tight, kissing and caressing her, she returning his kisses, joyful that his reason had come back.

"Va-m'rai," he said, "En-ro, the Carver of Tusks, has found a new tool and a new weapon; he has made the Red God his slave, to work for him, to warm him in winter, through the long cold days when the snow lies deep on the hills and the tribesmen shiver in their caves, drawing their garments of skins closer about them, and to protect him from the beasts of forest and cave. Come now and see!"

"Oh, En-ro, my love," begged Va-m'rai piteously. "Is the madness not yet gone? I beg you, let the Red God sleep; do not wake Him! Who knows what harm He may bring you: I am afraid—I fear Him! For my sake, En-ro, for the sake of Va-m'rai, who loves you and is outcast from her tribe, who is alone in all the world but for you, do not wake the Red God!"

En-ro laughed.

"Have no fear, Va-m'rai! The Red God is my slave; he obeys my will, even as my ax and lance and darts. Come, see!"

He drew the girl, still begging and protesting, to the cave, where he cleared away the brush and twigs and leaves from a space the height of a man in width, scraping clear down to the brown earth. He gathered dry leaves and twigs and sticks, making a little pile, then squatting down, he struck sparks till a little glow appeared among the leaves, Va-m'rai watching fearfully the while.

He blew gently on the glowing leaves till a flame appeared, then carefully laid small sticks on them, building up and building up, till the Red God leaped and roared from the pile. He turned to the girl and waved his hand proudly, but she asked:

"I see, but what will the Red God do for you?"

"Draw near," he answered, and Va-m'rai slowly and hesitatingly came closer.

"Hold out your hands toward the Red God," he said, and she did so. "Do you feel the warmth?" Va-m'rai nodded.

"The Red God will keep us warm through the long cold, but more than that. Look now!"

Taking the brand from the fire, he led the girl a hundred paces or so into the forest, to where he had caught a wolf in a snare. Going close to the snarling beast, En-ro thrust the brand in its face as it leaped toward him, and the wolf recoiled, howling. Again and again he beat the cowering animal with a blazing stick, till the wolf crouched on the ground, singed, whimpering, terrified. En-ro turned to Va-m'rai.

"See!" he cried. "If Menzono the Slayer dares not face the Red God, what other beast will dare?"

"But, Carver of Tusks," asked the girl, doubtfully, "will not the Red God turn on you, His master? And His wrath is terrible! Remember what He did to the forest, that night!"

"No, Swift Runner," answered the warrior. "It is but when the Red God is strong and large that we need fear Him. When small and weak He is easily slain. Tem, the water, will slay Him, and he can be beaten to death with green branches. Va, the wind, helps him grow, but he grows only if we feed him much food. By giving him small branches we can keep him small and weak."

"No, Va-m'rai, have no fear; the Red God is my slave, to do my bidding, now and forever, to bring us warmth and comfort and safety; he is stronger than lance or dart or ax, and it may be that we shall find other things He can do for us—I have not tried more than to find how I may command and rule Him; the rest is for the future."

The words were no more than out of his mouth when there came a rush of feet through the forest, and Meng, leading a band of negroes, broke into the open space where En-ro and Va-m'rai stood, and the two were seized. En-ro caught without his weapons, laid about him fiercely with a flaming stick, and shrieks and cries of pain rose from the burned attackers, but the negroes were no cowards and they came again and again to the fight, despite the strange new weapon the artist wielded.

Va-m'rai fought like a wildcat, desperately, with tooth and fist and claw—the Bison himself received a long and bloody gouge from a thumb-nail that barely missed his eye—but it was of no avail, and shortly the fugitives from the Ta-an were bound hand and foot and carried back to their cave, where they were roughly flung on the ground while the negroes seized the store of meat and gorged themselves, all but Meng lying down to sleep.

Meng, full-fed, walked over to where the captives lay, and looked down at them, an evil smile on his thick lips. In pure venom, he jabbed En-ro with his lance, and the blood started from the wound.

"You thought to escape me!" snarled

the Bison in his own tongue. "You shall not do so again. Day and night shall you be watched, and daily shall you be beaten with rods till you die! And you shall chip no more flints; no weapon shall reach your hand for the few more days you have to live. And Va-m'rai shall see you die, she shall see you beaten daily, and when you are dead she shall be my woman, and, at your dying moment, you shall see her in my arms!"

And once more he drove his spear into En-ro's thigh.

"Beast!" answered the Carver of Tusks. "Foul beast! Child of a hyena! Misbegotten son of the Devils of the Air! Black of skin and blacker of soul, do you think to frighten a warrior of the Ta-an? Fool, even yet shall you die at my hand! And Va-m'rai shall never be yours; a girl of the Ta-an would die rather than be your woman—know you what the maidens of the tribe call you? 'Ape-man'! Ho, ho! Ape-man!"

Bristling and foaming at the insult, Meng raised his lance to slay, but En-ro only laughed. Slowly, reluctantly, the Bison lowered the weapon, saying:

"It will be more pleasant to see you die through days than to end you quickly. What is this strange new weapon you have found? It was the clouds rising from the mountain and the gleam of the weapon that guided us to you."

"What is it? It is your death! Find out for yourself what it is—Ape-man! You shall know it soon enough!"

Snarling, Meng raised his lance again, but lowered it and turned to the cave, where he prodded one of his men awake with the butt of his spear, gave a few orders, and lay down. The negro, yawning and stretching, took ax and lance and went to watch En-ro and Va-m'rai, not taking his eyes from them during the long night.

In the morning the negroes awoke, ate, unbound the feet of the captives, and jerked them upright, then prodded them with lances, and the procession started for Meng's camp, Va-m'rai ahead with a negro on each side and one behind; then, guarded in the same manner, En-ro, and the other negroes closing up the rear.

En-ro still carried in his girdle the flint and the hammer-stone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED GOD BITES.

FOR three days En-ro, bound to a tree and guarded by four negroes, was beaten. Twenty-five strokes each day were laid on, from a lash of rhinoceros hide in the hands of a stalwart warrior—twenty-five and no more, for Meng did not wish him to die quickly, as would have happened had the beatings been too heavy.

And in agony Va-m'rai watched, bound to another tree ten paces distant. She tried to turn her head away, but it was forced around and held; she tried to close her eyes, but what she imagined was worse than the sight.

And when each beating was over En-ro's back was rubbed with salt and with sap from a pine, that the bleeding might be stopped and the victim ready for the following day.

But never a sound did the white warrior make; never a sign did he give of the pain he endured. In silence and unflinching he bore the torture, and when the twenty-five lashes were laid on he turned to Va-m'rai and smiled, giving no glance toward Meng or any other. This utter contempt stirred up in the Bison a rage beside which his former anger was trifling.

On the morning of the fourth day Meng and his warriors went to hunt, though indeed the Bison's own wounds were not yet fully healed, and he lacked much of his ordinary vigor. But before leaving the camp he went to taunt En-ro and to enjoy the sight of the white man's back, raw and swollen from the lashings.

Every bitter word, every foul taunt, every insult the Bison could command was hurled at the Carver of Tusks, but the artist of the Ta-an did not even turn his head; steadily and in silence he gazed past the negro as though he were not there, and more than once Meng's lance was raised to kill, but lowered again as the giant thought of the days to come. At length he departed, leaving the four negroes on guard, saying to them:

"Keep this man with your lives; wily and strong is he, a great warrior, as you should know, and will trick you if chance offers, or overcome you by his great strength. Go not too nigh him."

"Yes, Master," answered the negroes, bowing, and one spoke, timorously:

"But, Master, should he by strength or wile win loose, what then?"

Meng glared at him fiercely, his lips curling back from his teeth in an evil grin as he replied:

"Then wait not my return, but run on your spears, for if he be gone and you alive, be sure that, bound hand and foot, you will lie on the home of the Little Red Ants, whose teeth are like poisoned needles!"

The negroes shuddered; to be eaten alive by swarming millions of ants!

So Meng and his followers left for a day's hunting, and En-ro sat on the ground beneath his tree, the four men watching him. All day long he sat there, shifting from time to time, and eating from the lump of flesh thrown down beside him, or drinking from the gourd of water that one of the guards carried from a nearby stream; Meng wished him to be strong to bear the torture, and En-ro also wished to keep his strength—though for another reason!

Va-m'rai he could not see; she was taken away to some hiding-place after each day's beating was done.

And so the weary day dragged on, the sun climbing over the tree-tops and sinking again in the western sky, while the patches of light on the ground, sifting through the trees, grew shorter and rounder, then lengthened out again as the sun declined, growing more and more yellow toward evening. The guards chatted among themselves, and once or twice spoke to En-ro, asking some question or other, of which he took no notice.

At times they jeered at him, made fun of him, taunted him, for they were proud to be guarding a white man, a warrior of the Ta-an; they promised him a harder beating on the morrow, they jested and boasted that the white man would cry for mercy, they mimicked the writhings and the screams that would be his, and once or twice flung clods of earth at him, but he gave no sign that he had seen or heard.

The dusk was falling, and the shadows were growing deeper and heavier under the trees, though the tops still glowed in the clear golden light, when one of the guards rose, stretched, and walked over, lazily, to where En-ro sat.

He examined the white man's bonds with care, then loosened those on his wrists. Another negro came forward, carrying a lump of meat, some berries, and a few nuts, which he laid down by En-ro, the two then drawing back three or four steps, still keeping their eyes on the prisoner.

The Carver of Tusks began to eat, when his eye was caught by a faint movement in the forest, behind the backs of his four guards. He watched intently, and soon made out a huge, tawny head with gleaming eyes, that he knew for a lion's.

"Snorr-m'rai-no!" he breathed, and even as the negroes whirled about the lion sprang. His great paws struck the nearest man to the earth, the warrior's arms flinging out wildly and his ax whirling through the air to En-ro's feet.

The lion stood with his paws on his prey, looking about, his head thrown back, and in that instant another of the guards rushed in and struck the beast with his lance.

The lion turned to meet the attack, and a furious battle followed, the three unhurt negroes assailing him on all sides, dashing in to strike and dashing away as the great cat whirled, while the guard whom he had struck down crawled away to safety.

En-ro seized the ax that lay beside him, with two blows cut the rawhide thongs that bound him, snatched flint and hammer-stone from his girdle, and frantically struck and struck again, showers of sparks falling on the dry, wind-blown leaves that lay all about, till a glow appeared among them.

One eye on the fight, En-ro blew this to flame, then leaping upward with all his might he caught and tore from the pine a half-dead, resinous branch, and thrust it into the fire.

The Red God bit into the dry wood, and in a few seconds it was blazing. Meanwhile, the fight had gone against the negroes; the Fear That Walks the Night was too strong for them, and two lay dead, one torn half in two from side to side by a

single sweep of the razor-sharp claws, the other crumbled in a grotesque heap, his spine broken and his chest crushed by a blow of a giant paw that had caught him as he turned to run.

And the third! Blind, a frightful welter of blood, he rolled on the ground, moaning and slobbering in agony, for a downward sweep of the lion's paw had caught him on the forehead and had ripped and torn the skin and flesh and muscles from brow to knee, laying bare the bones and tearing his jaw from the socket. Him Snorr-m'rai-no seized, sinking his teeth in the wretch's shoulder and flinging the doomed man over his back, to carry him off.

At that moment En-ro, ax in his right hand and flaming branch in his left, leaped before the lion and with one sure, swift stroke drove the brand over the huge beast's eye.

Roaring with pain, the lion dropped the negro and turned to meet this new attack. He crouched for an instant, every muscle tense, then sprang at En-ro, who met the leap, drove the still blazing branch far down the lion's throat, and leaped aside. The lion, furious with rage and torture, dropped to the ground and placed one paw on the branch to tear it from his throat, and En-ro seized that instant.

Whirling the great stone ax aloft with both hands, he leaped forward and brought it down with all his might full on the lion's head. Driven by the strongest man in all the tribe of the Ta-an, the sharp flint-edge shore through flesh and bone—and the fight was over.

En-ro turned to where the Red God was devouring the dry leaves and branches, tore a green limb from a near-by oak, and set himself to beat the Red God to death, even as he had slain Snorr-m'rai-no. The Red God had grown fast during the fight, and En-ro worked furiously, beating out the little licking tongues that flickered and grew and spread, but at last it was done and the forest was safe.

En-ro wiped the sweat from his face with his forearm and stood panting heavily, looking over the burned space to where lay Snorr-m'rai-no, dead among the dead negroes. The wounded negro whom the lion

had first struck down lay groaning among the bushes a little distance off, and En-ro, stepping over to him, slew him with a blow of the ax that had killed the lion. As he turned away, he saw another negro coming toward him, carrying an ax, and the Carver of Tusks sprang toward him, his weapon raised.

But the negro, a little, wizen, gray-haired man, fell on his knees and held the haft of the ax toward En-ro in token of surrender, and En-ro stayed the blow.

"Oh, Carver of Tusks, mighty warrior, great artist, master of the Strange God, spare me!" said the negro. "Nu-kzen am I, Molder of Clay, and because I have long worshiped your great skill in carving the tooth of the Hill that Walks, I bought this your ax from the warrior that took it from you after the great fight in the tree. And because you are a mighty warrior and have slain the Fear That Walks the Night, and because you are master of the Strange God and can bring Him to life or slay Him at will, therefore I now bring this ax to you, praying that you will accept it and show your favor to me who am your slave."

En-ro took the ax, his own ax, and balanced it thoughtfully in his hand, joyful to feel it again, for it had been fitted to his grasp through many days of labor, fitted in grip, in length, in weight, and in balance, and he had decorated it with loving care, carving figures along the haft, and a knob for the end. His heart leaped within him, and, looking down at the negro, who still knelt before him, head bowed, he said:

"Nu-kzen, I accept your gift. You shall go with me, but not as my slave. Because you, too, are an artist you shall go as my friend, friend to En-ro the Carver of Tusks, warrior of the tribe of Ta-an, and master of the Red God! And I will teach you to carve the tooth of Do-m'rai, the Hill that Walks, and to command the Red God. But first you must help me get Va-m'rai, the Swift Runner and to escape from the hands of Meng."

Nu-kzen looked up at him with worship in his dark eyes, the look of adoration one sees in a faithful dog, and answered:

"Indeed, my master, I will help you escape, but why wait for the Swift Runner?

Why not let the Bison have her? There are many women, and such a one as you need not lack!"

En-ro scowled blackly, and Nu-kzen, shivering, crouched lower as the Carver of Tusks replied:

"Nu-kzen," he said, "speak not thus! Such as you cannot understand, but for a warrior of the Ta-an there is but one woman while that one lives, and he is bound to fight for her, even to death. Rise now, and help me set her free!"

Obediently Nu-kzen rose, and the two set out to find Va-m'rai and free her, that they might make their escape, but before they had gone twenty paces from the spot where they stood there came the sound of the hunters returning. Far off, the two artists heard many voices chanting the hunting song, then they could make out the rustling and crackling of the underbrush as the laden troupe marched along, and soon the leaders came into view, Meng first, six of his chosen warriors following on his heels—then a dozen or more young men who had not yet risen to the dignity of warriors, but for a year or two longer served as bearers—then the remainder of the fighting men of the Bison's tribe.

On long poles across their shoulders the bearers carried the game, several sheep, two of the wild cattle of the lowlands, and a deer, the feet of the beasts being tied together and a pole thrust between them, that a man might lift each end.

Staggering and sweating under their loads, the porters came forward, but halted in confusion, dropping their loads to the ground as, Meng, catching sight of En-ro unbound, stopped in anger.

He glanced around, saw the dead guards on the ground and Nu-kzen standing at the white warrior's side and thought that he, the negro artist, had traitorously set En-ro free.

He scowled fiercely, and with a bellow like that of the beast from which he took his name, raised his lance, rushing at Nu-kzen, who fell on his knees, hands lifted, and cried aloud for mercy.

En-ro stepped quickly between the two and turned the lance aside with a swift movement of his ax, and Meng's rage shifted

to the Carver of Tusks, who confronted him fearlessly. The Bison drew back, poised his spear, the point an arm's length from En-ro's breast—and stood rigid, for En-ro did not move; arms at his sides, the ax swinging lightly in his right hand, he stood glaring into Meng's eyes, and his own were narrowed to little slits, in the depths of which glinted sparks of light. His head thrown forward, his jaw outthrust, his mouth drawn to a straight, hard line, his muscles relaxed but ready, every line of the white warrior's body cried aloud "Danger!"

So for the space of thirty breaths this duel of eyes lasted, the two men staring, unflinching, each at the other, silent, while the band of negroes looked from one to the other, from the white man, tall and straight and handsome as a god to the black chieftain, scarred and ugly and evil, his lance-point at the other's breast.

Not a word was spoken, not a sound was heard save the rasping of branches and the rustling of leaves, and once, far off, the harsh scream of a hyena, till one of the younger men, unable to bear the strain, moved his feet, and Meng's eyes wavered, shifted, dropped, and with a deep growl he drew back a pace and lowered his spear.

The tension broken, the negroes spread over the place, soon finding the dead lion and chattering excitedly over the discovery; Meng came and looked, and asked Nu-kzen what had happened, and the little artist, wizened and gray, tiny beside the huge bulk of the Bison, told of the fight, with many gestures, pointing often toward En-ro, who stood apart, looking contemptuously at the chattering, swarming negroes—"not so different from the apes!" he told himself.

Presently Meng came toward En-ro, to question him, and the white warrior noted that, for all his efforts, the Bison could not keep a note of respect from his voice.

"You slew Snorr-m'rai-no with a new weapon?" asked Meng, and En-ro looked the negro chieftain over contemptuously, replying:

By the aid of the Red God, who is my slave, I slew him."

"And the Red God obeys your commands?"

"In truth."

"Show!"

En-ro gazed thoughtfully at the Bison for a few moments, then stooped and with his ax cleared a space on the ground, gathered some dry leaves, and crouched over them, the negroes pressing close. He rose to his feet and motioned them back, for he was not minded to let them see too much.

"Stand farther off!" he cried. "Back! Back! The Red God bites hard!"

They fell back twenty paces or more, and he turned his back to them, crouched over the leaves again, and struck sparks, blowing the leaves to a flame, then took a dry branch and laid it in the flames till it was burning well, and swung around toward the watchers, whirling the brand in the air, sparks flying from it in all directions—and the negroes, all but Meng—and even he was impressed—fell to their knees with cries of fear and reverence.

The Bison stood upright, but shrank back as En-ro approached, and asked, his voice quavering despite his struggle to control it:

"Does the Red God indeed bite hard?"

En-ro did not answer, but glanced with a smile toward the carcass of the lion, and Meng's eyes followed his.

"Will He bite a man?"

"Try!" said En-ro, thrusting the branch toward the Bison, but Meng was of no mind to be bitten; instead, he looked toward the crowd, singled out a young man, and, pointing to him, cried:

"Bind him and lay him here!" Instantly a dozen others seized the victim, tied him hand and foot, and carried him to where the two stood, laying him on the ground and hurrying fearfully back to the crowd once more.

"Prove the Red God's teeth on him!" said Meng, and the Carver of Tusks laid the blazing stick on the victim's chest. The tortured man writhed and groaned and the stench of burning flesh rose in the air, till Meng said:

"Enough!" and En-ro lifted the brand, while the Bison stooped and examined the frightful burn, then straightened up, saying:

"You shall be tortured till you teach me to command the Red God!" and turning to

his warriors, cried: "Seize him and bind him!"

Enro leaped to the pile of blazing leaves, stamped them swiftly out, and stood, swinging the flaming brand, and not a man of the negroes stepped forward—none rose from his knees! A rustle, a whisper, ran through the crowd, but not one moved, and Meng glared about, his anger rising; his breath came hard, his chest heaved, he looked from one to another of his men, then, lifting his spear, rushed across the open space and plunged the weapon full into the breast of the nearest man.

The warrior swayed, toppled sidewise, and fell dead, but still none rose to his feet. Instead there ran a gasp through the ranks, and one said humbly, fearfully:

"Spare us, Lord! We dare not! This man commands the gods!"

Meng looked irresolutely about him for a moment, then rushed away into the forest—this was beyond any experience he had ever known!

Thereafter En-ro was not molested as, Nu-kzen at his heels like a faithful dog, he wandered about the camp; indeed, the negroes, timidly at first, then more boldly, made friendly advances, bringing him food and small gifts, which he accepted graciously, whereat the givers were delighted—pleased to be noticed in friendly manner by one who, single-handed, had slain a lion, flattered and grateful for the kindness of one who could command the gods.

Meng, however, did not appear, nor did his sons; all seven remained hidden in the forest, together with the three priests of the tribe, and En-ro was uneasily conscious that they might be planning an attack on him. Still, he could not leave without Va-m'rai, and though he questioned one after another of the negroes, none could tell him where she was concealed.

The camp lay in the form of a rough circle perhaps three hundred paces across, in the deep forest, there being numbers of little paths, just wide enough for one man, going out from the central space, though one could not see more than a few steps along any one of them, for they twisted and turned confusingly.

Did one follow one of the paths to the

end, however, he found an open space like the central one, but smaller, with possibly half a dozen or a dozen rude shelters made of two sticks thrust slanting into the ground with brush laid across them, or, more likely, simply a few spots where, having cleared away the underbrush, the negroes lay on the ground to sleep, for each of these little clearings was the home of a family.

Elsewhere the brush grew thick and dense, so that in most places a man could hardly make his way through it except by cutting a passage before him as he went.

En-ro explored one after another of these clearings in the hope of finding the girl he loved, but, though the families invariably received him with reverence, prostrating themselves on the ground, while the head of the family reverently lifted En-ro's foot and placed it on his own head, they could tell him nothing; Va-m'rai seemed to have disappeared utterly.

He dared not seek out Meng and provoke or challenge him to a duel; he felt confident that he could overcome the Bison in fight, and he knew that the main body of the negro tribe feared and worshiped him far more than they did their chief; but he feared that at the first hint of such an attempt one of Meng's sons or one of the priests would slay Va-m'rai.

Plan after plan to discover the girl's whereabouts he turned over in his mind, but could find no satisfactory one, and he was beginning to grow discouraged; he was almost ready to attack the Bison and run the risk of Va-m'rai's death. On the other hand, he knew that Meng dared make no attempt on the girl beyond holding her hidden; such an act would be carried to En-ro's ears, and would bring about what Meng most feared—an assault from the Red God.

Late one afternoon En-ro and Nu-kzen were squatting under a tree, the former looking steadily into the forest, thinking, the latter gazing adoringly at the white man, the master whom he worshiped. At length En-ro turned toward the little negro and smiled at his evident admiration, whereat the latter, encouraged by the sign of favor, spoke:

"Master," he said, "do you desire your

weapons, your dagger, your lance, your throwing-stick, and darts?"

En-ro's eyes blazed.

"If I desire them!" he said. "There are but two things I desire more; the Star-Marked One, taken from me after the fight in the tree, and Va-m'rai!"

"It is known to me who has the weapons; perhaps we can get them. As for the others, that is still to learn."

"Speak!"

"Sen, who lives down that path"—Nu-kzen pointed—"has them. We will go quietly along the path, and you will hide yourself in the bushes, leaping on him as he passes. Then you may take again your weapons, which the Bison gave him as a mark of favor after they were taken from you."

"But why should he pass? Must we lie in wait till he is moved to go elsewhere?"

Nu-kzen chuckled.

"I will go to him," he answered, "and tell him that Ba-kai, whom he loves, awaits him here. She scorns him, and for many moons has he pursued her; he is besotted with love, and will come. Oh, yes, he will come—to meet her!"

En-ro leaped to his feet and shook himself, and the two stepped across the open space to the path Nu-kzen had pointed out. Soundlessly they followed its windings, till at last the murmur of a voice came to their ears, and, rounding the last turn, they peeped cautiously into the open space where Sen lived.

Nu-kzen, peering under the white man's arm, lifted to hold back a leafy branch. En-ro could see, lying about on the ground, several dark forms, Sen's wives, and across the clearing he could make out, in the dusk, the shape of Sen himself, kneeling before a bush, his back to the path.

The Carver of Tusks gasped and could hardly restrain himself from dashing forward, for, propped in a forked limb of the bush, he could see the gleaming figure of the bride of O-Ma-Ken, the form of the Star-Marked One! But he drew back and hid himself in the brush a dozen paces down the path, while Nu-kzen went forward and touched Sen on the shoulder as he prayed; then as the man turned, gave the false mes-

sage. Sen rose to his feet, his face working with delight.

"I go!" he said. "I go! Indeed, there is great magic in this figure! It was but now I prayed to the Star-Marked One for the favor of Ba-kai, and behold, you come with a message from her!"

"But take your weapons!" cried Nu-kzen, as Sen started away. "Be not utterly a fool! Who knows what beasts may be abroad? It is the hunting hour."

"Thanks, my friend!" said Sen, as he lifted the weapons—En-ro's weapons—from the ground. "Love has so filled my heart, and joy, that I am forgetful!"

Nu-kzen grinned sardonically as the other hurried down the path, then stepped to the little figure, carved from the tooth of Dom'rai, took it reverently from the bush, placed it in his girdle, and followed Sen, grunting:

"He has four wives; he will have no need for this—five is too many!"

Meanwhile, En-ro crouched in the bushes, waiting, and as Sen hastened by, forgetful of all else than Ba-kai, the white man rose to his full height and sprang out. Sen, his inner mind warned by some rustle of the leaves, whirled in his tracks and raised his dagger, but before he could strike En-ro closed with him, caught both the negro's wrists in his strong hands, and so, arms spread, breast to breast, they tugged and strained, Sen striving to free himself, En-ro struggling to throw him.

For a dozen breaths they strove, and Sen opened his mouth to yell, but in that instant En-ro's knee, driven fiercely up, struck the negro below the breast bone, and he went limp. Mouth open, head lolling back, gasping for breath, paralyzed by the terrible blow, the negro slumped like an empty skin; En-ro twisted him round, passed his left arm under Sen's left, gripped the skin of the negro's right breast, and held him up.

He placed his right hand on Sen's forehead and swung the helpless man sharply back and down, striking the back of Sen's neck with his knee as the victim fell.

There was a sharp snap, and En-ro let fall the lifeless body, stopped, and took his weapons, then raised the body and hurled

it into the brush, Nu-kzen, who had followed, watching with a smile.

"That was a fortunate thought," said Nu-kzen, and, stepping forward, laid the figure of the Star-Marked One in En-ro's hand. The Carver of Tusks, trembling with joy and excitement, pressed the little figure to his bosom, then placed it in his girdle and laid his hand on the negro's head.

"Nu-kzen," said he, solemnly, "you have served me well; in reward you shall learn to command the Red God. Come!"

"Oh, Master!" exclaimed Nu-kzen, overwhelmed at this great honor, and again, "Oh, Master—" but he could get no further; he could not command his voice.

Together the two went back once more to the central clearing, and there En-ro, gathering leaves, striking sparks and making a fire, instructed Nu-kzen, repeating for the little negro all the knowledge he had gained of the Red God and his ways. Then Nu-kzen, repeating after his master all that had been said, repeating it again and again till it was firmly fixed in his mind, took the flint and hammer-stone, and in turn, trembling with excitement and fear at the great power he was summoning, struck sparks and blew the glowing leaves into a flame, then fell at En-ro's feet, clasping them in his arms and abasing his head. But the Carver of Tusks raised him, saying:

"Rise, Nu-kzen! This is not seemly for one who commands the Red God! Hereafter you will bow to no man save me alone; before all others you will carry your head upright and not even to me will you kneel. But tell no one of this knowledge I have bestowed on you; in the hands of one ignorant or careless or evil the Red God might work much harm, even to destroying the entire forest, with all living things therein."

And Nu-kzen swore to keep the secret, and En-ro lay down to sleep, the little negro sitting at his head to keep watch, his wizened body and kinky gray curls seeming almost those of a great gray ape as he squatted with gleaming, watchful eyes to guard the warrior-artist of the Ta-an, the master whom he adored, to whom he had sworn fidelity even unto the last, as long

as breath lived in his body and his limbs had power to move.

CHAPTER V.

NU-KZEN'S REPORT.

SOME time during the night En-ro awoke. He looked at the stars, and saw that it was long past the hour when he had told Nu-kzen to waken him for his watch, and he wondered that he had not roused himself, for he could, for the most part, awake after any time he wished. Then he remembered the day before, the weariness with which he had lain down, and understood.

But why had Nu-kzen not called him?

He looked about in sudden fear—Nu-kzen was gone! The Carver of Tusks leaped to his feet and searched with his eyes the clearing, but the moonlight showed no human form, only the strange, ghostly clump of birches opposite the place where he stood, the dark mass of the oaks and maples, and the tall shaft of the great pine that he knew so well, with the thick underbrush forming a barrier beneath the trees.

Enro's first thought was that the little negro had been overpowered and carried away by the Bison's orders, but there was no sign of struggle, and in any case he himself, sleeping lightly as any beast of the forest, could not have failed to awaken.

No, Nu-kzen must have gone of his own free will—but why? Treachery? En-ro shook his head; the oath of fealty which the Molder of Clay had sworn was not to be broken by any man—one breaking such a vow would be hunted of men, outlawed, slain on sight, and would go astray on his voyage through the Long Dark; the gods would bewilder him, and he would emerge from the Long Dark to eternal torture—hunted forever by the Faceless Man, the Invisible Thing that makes no sound, and all the fearful spirits that people the Place of Evil.

En-ro shook his head again, looked about for tracks, realized that he could follow no trail by the cold light of the moon, and sat down to wait for the day.

At length a faint gray light crept into

the sky, the stars paled, and one by one winked out, the light grew stronger, and the forest woke. A pearly mist hung like a veil among the trees; above, in the branches, birds chirped faintly, first one, then another, and presently, as the light grew, one burst into song, to be followed by others and yet others, till the full chorus was ringing through the woods, and bird after bird, his song of greeting sung, at length went flashing and darting among the branches in search of insects.

Small animals scampered about the forest floor, their rustlings and squeakings sounding loud through the brush, overhead a squirrel chattered and scolded, and a great green snake, like that the Carver of Tusks had slain when he woke to find it coiled on his breast, slid past, the artist watching, making note of its sinuous, graceful body, and evil, triangular head, and thinking to himself that some day he would carve such a one, coiled about the haft of a war-ax.

And now the sun, rising higher, sent shafts of light streaming down through the mist, warming it, so that it began to tumble and roll in billows, rolling upward, and at last shredding thinly out, the gleaming, sparkling grass and the ghostly trees showing clearer and clearer, more and more distant, till presently the mist had altogether disappeared and the clearing stood warm and bright under the full light of day.

En-ro was beginning to be worried; it was strange that Nu-kzen should be gone so long, and the Carver of Tusks had about made up his mind to go in search of the little negro when that one came stepping into the clearing, a smile on his face and the carcass of a fawn balanced on his shoulders, his arms clasped about his legs. He marched across to where En-ro stood, dropped the fawn, and said, his smile growing broader:

"Great news, Master! But eat first."

"Where were you?" asked En-ro, and Nu-kzen grinned from ear to ear as he replied:

"Spying, Master. Spying on Meng."

En-ro leaned forward and gripped the other's arm, thrusting his face close to Nu-kzen's.

"And you learned—?"

"Much, Master!" And Mu-kzen, still grinning scratched his side with his long nails, repeating: "Much, Master. But eat; my news will keep, and a full stomach is good in the early morning."

And he fell to butchering the fawn, stripping the hide from the flesh with speed and skill, carving out a piece of the tender meat, and giving it to En-ro, then cutting a piece of meat for himself.

The two squatted on their haunches and ate, tearing the still warm flesh with their strong teeth and wiping their hands from time to time on the grass.

Various negroes drifted into the clearing and looked at the pair, each and every one bowing and saluting respectfully the white man and his companion (for they honored Nu-kzen as the friend of one who could command the gods) then wandered out again about their own affairs.

By and by Nu-kzen rose and went to the carcass, stripped the meat from one of the marrow-bones, and, asking permission with a look, took En-ro's ax and split the bone skillfully and neatly, offering it, laid open, to the Carver of Tusks, who took one part and motioned the negro to take the other.

"Thanks, Master," said Nu-kzen, and the two men scraped out and ate the sweet marrow, smacking their lips with pleasure.

Their stomachs full, they gave their hands a final cleansing, then stretched out on the grass, and En-ro said:

"And now the news."

"During the night," began Nu-kzen, while still you slept, one came by, treading softly. I watched, but could not see his face—for he kept to the shadows—till he trod on a stone or a root, which, turning beneath his foot, threw him heavily, so that he rolled into a patch of moonlight. Swiftly he caught himself and was back again in the dark, but I had seen—it was Ken-zan, who is oldest son of the Bison's fourth wife, and closest to Meng of all his children. He is a young warrior—it was but last summer that his ears were slit and his teeth chipped to points by the priest—and he greatly desires honor. By the law of our tribe, as perchance you know, he can buy no wife till he has done some great deed—"

"The Ta-an have the same law."

Nu-kzen bowed, and went on:

"So now he seeks honor. I rose and followed. Ken-zan could not know"—and Nu-kzen chuckled—"no man among the tribe can see or hear the Molder of Clay when he follows a trail. I followed, and he led me to Meng. I hid in the brush and listened, and there it was that I heard the news. Master, the Bison desires your life." En-ro laughed.

"That is no news!" said he.

"True, Master, but he means to have it. Speaking, the Bison said: 'Ken-zan, my son, you have seen this warrior from the Ta-an command the Red God; you know that did he raise his hand the tribesmen would slay me, and you, and all my sons; you know that he stays his hand but because he fears for Va-m'rai, and can he find where she is hidden it is death to me and to all who are faithful to me.'

"I greatly desire this woman, but more do I desire to slay this man and devour his heart, that his courage may come to me and that I, the Bison, may be the bravest man in all the world, as now is En-ro. You saw how he shamed me before my warriors; how I dared not thrust him through with my lance. Therefore do I desire to eat his heart, that such great courage may be mine.

"But the Ta-an do not thus; to them a fallen warrior is but a fallen warrior, and they do not devour him, believing not that his courage can enter into them with his heart. But the priests of the Ta-an will greatly desire to know the secret he holds of how to command the Red God—and he is outlawed by them.

"Go you, therefore, to the priests of the Ta-an, tell them of what you have seen him do, and say to them: 'Behold, if Meng, the Bison, may keep Va-m'rai to wife, and may have the heart of En-ro, he and his sons will fall on the same En-ro, bind him, and deliver him to you, that you may torture him till he reveals to you the secret of his mastery over the Red God.'"

"Ken-zan then rose and answered: 'I go, my father,' took his weapons, and set out for the homes of the Mountain Cave People."

During Nu-kzen's story En-ro's face had grown darker and darker, and when the little negro had finished he burst out:

"By all the gods, I swear to give Meng to the beasts!" and leaped to his feet, but Nu-kzen placed a hand on his master's arm.

"And Va-m'rai?" he asked, and En-ro stopped short, thought a moment, and seated himself again, his head in his hands. Long he thought, then lifted his head and said:

"Nu-kzen, you have done well! Will you help further?"

"To the death, Master!"

"Good! Go now to the Ta-an, find Snorr, the chieftain, and tell him that I can command the Red God. Tell him what you have seen me do; that by the aid of the Red God I slew Snorr-m'rai-no; that the Red God will fight for me; that he will warm us in cold, when Co-sa, the ice, has locked the streams and built bridges over the pools; take flint and half the hammer-stone, and bring the Red God to life, that Snorr may see and know that you speak truth.

"Bid him then lay the matter before the council of the Ta-an, asking them whether this gift may lift the ban of outlawry that lies upon me and upon Va-m'rai. Snorr has no love for the priests, and it may be that he can sway the council to spare me; it may be that he cannot make head against the priests, but it is our only hope.

"Go now, return swiftly, and bring me word. In the space of your journey I will endeavor to find where Va-m'rai is hidden. Go now!"

Nu-kzen rose, bowed, took his weapons, cut a piece of flesh from the fawn, and slipped into the forest as silent as the fleeting shadow of a cloud. En-ro bent his head once more in his hands and thought.

The sun crept slowly down toward the horizon, and presently a cloud drew across it, so that the air grew chill. En-ro shivered and looked up, and he saw that the whole sky was covered with dark gray clouds; a drop of rain fell on his hand and he shook it off impatiently. He gazed at the sky, then at the trees about him, noting the brown of the oaks, the red of the

maples, and the yellow of the birch. A birch sapling, no larger than a man's arm, grew near by, and En-ro saw how its leaves flamed against the dark green of the pine that stood behind it.

"It is the autumn rain," he thought, "that takes the leaves from the trees. Three days will it rain!" And he was disgusted and annoyed at the prospect of the discomfort that awaited him. He rose, shook himself, and stretched, for he was cramped from squatting so long, then took his way to the shelter of the great pine, whose branches grew low to the ground. By now the rain was falling steadily, with a pattering sound, and the sky was dark; it was growing dusk in the forest. Stronger and stronger fell the rain, and En-ro wrapped himself in a skin and lay down under the tree, resolved to be comfortable as long as he might—until the rain should penetrate the fronds of his shelter and bring the inevitable drenching.

All that night it rained, not in torrents, not with lightning and thunder, but in a steady, relentless, swishing downpour that penetrated and drenched and saturated everything, so that En-ro awoke chilled and shivering.

As he squatted, tearing a piece of the fawn for his breakfast, one of Meng's warriors passed through the open space, and En-ro could see that he was miserable, chilled to the bone, his garment of skin sodden and clammy. By some association of ideas a vague thought flashed into his mind, to be instantly seized and developed. Some-what after this fashion ran his reasoning:

"Tem, the water, makes us cold and wet; the Red God makes us warm. Tem fights the Red God, and when the Red God is weak Tem slays Him; may it not be that the Red God, strong and vigorous, will fight and conquer Tem, making us not only warm, but also dry?"

At once he set to work, scraped a clear place on the earth, hunted about till he found, in the hollow of a log, some dry leaves that a squirrel had stored there for a bed, took slivers of bark from the pine, and knelt over his little heap, striking sparks with flint and the half of the hammer-stone he had kept.

After much labor he succeeded in getting a little glow among the powdered leaves—he had rubbed them to dust between his hands; they caught the sparks better so—and, feeding more leaves and little splinters of pine, blowing gently the while, he soon saw the tongues of the Red God licking upward from the little heap. He added more twigs, then resinous sticks and branches, and soon the Red God leaped and roared.

En-ro stood by the fire, turning around, warming himself, drying the water from his own skin and from the leopard skin he wore, and soon he was quite warm and dry and comfortable once more. He thought to himself that the Red God, though an evil master, was a good servant, and he was pleased at the idea of such a friend through the long winter months; no longer would he huddle in skins in his cave, not daring to go out.

With a friend like the Red God warmth and comfort were his wherever he might be. And, too, the Red God would fight for him; had He not done so against the Fear That Walks the Night?

Idly he wondered, toasting himself, what would happen when the Red God met Sa, the snow; would they fight, as did Tem and the Red God, with hissing and smoke and anger, or would the Red God devour Sa, even as He devoured branches and leaves? He decided that they would fight, for Sa was own brother to Tem, changing, indeed, into Tem at times, by force of magic.

Thus he squatted by the fire, warming himself, meditating, and listening to the roar and crackle of the flames and the steady patter of the rain-drops on the leaves. Presently he looked up and saw one of Meng's warriors standing some paces off, watching the fire intently, and leaning on his spear. En-ro fixed his eyes on the negro, who, drawn by the psychic power of the steady concentration of mind, soon became restless, then turned toward the white man. En-ro smiled encouragingly, waved his hand to the fire, and said:

"Draw near and be warm; I will not let the Red God harm you; only go not too close, for He bites even me if I go too near.

The negro, a slow step at a time, ap-

proached till he felt the comfortable warmth, then stood still, watching again. At length he turned to En-ro with a question: "The Red God will bite even you?"

"If I go too near."

"Are you not His master, and He your slave?"

"In very truth."

"Why, then, will He harm you?" asked the negro, puzzled.

En-ro laughed, and in turn asked:

"Ka-tem of the Ta-an, is he known to you?"

"The tamer of beasts? Yes."

"You know that he has tamed and keeps for a friend, Menzono, the Slayer?"

"In truth."

"What, now, would happen should Ka-tem, the master, take his food from Menzono, the slave?"

"The wolf would bit Ka-tem."

"Bite Ka-tem, his master?"

"In very truth!"

"There is your answer; as Menzono would bite Ka-tem, even so would the Red God, fiercer and more powerful than a thousand Menzono, bite me, His master."

The negro nodded in acknowledgment of the explanation and its reasonableness, warmed himself more, then saying:

"Thanks, Ba-non!" strode away into the forest, leaving En-ro more than a little pleased, for by the title of Ba-non, signifying "Lord," or "Master," the black warrior had formally admitted the white man's superiority; it was a word of utmost respect—one almost altogether reserved for divinity.

So passed three days of the rains, crowds of negroes coming at times to warm themselves at En-ro's fire, bringing gifts, chiefly of food, and maintaining always a demeanor of the greatest respect; there was no pushing, no crowding, and always the Carver of Tusks saw his power growing among the black men of the Bison's tribe.

Once Meng came and looked on from a distance, evidently enraged, but not daring to protest; he watched for a time, turned, and disappeared in the forest, and presently came back with three of his sons, striding up toward the fire where En-ro sat, surrounded by a dozen or more warriors.

En-ro leaped to his feet, seized his ax and a flaming brand, and advanced to meet the four, but a low growl ran through the group of negroes and lances were lifted—the negroes ranged themselves behind En-ro, and Meng, turning, plunged again among the trees—and En-ro knew that his life was safe from open attack; Meng's power was broken!

But after all, the Bison had still a dozen adherents; his own sons would do his bidding—and worst of all, he still held Va-m'rai; her life and honor were in no wise safe—and there were the priests of the Ta-an to reckon with!

On the fourth day the rain ceased though the woods, save in the little space about the fire, were still wet, and En-ro sat by the flames, thinking, planning how to recover his loved one. Suddenly he heard behind him a voice, hardly more than a whisper:

"White warrior!"

Instantly he seized his great stone ax, and, quick as a striking snake, rolled out of the circle of firelight. From the underbrush there came a strange, cackling laugh, and a figure stepped into the light, saying:

"Does the white warrior fear me? Behold, I have no fear of him! Indeed, life is not so sweet that I fear to die!"

En-ro saw now that it was a woman, and drew near, ax ready, for he feared a trap.

"Who are you?" he asked, and the woman, cackling a horrible laugh from her toothless gums, answered with a question:

"Would you wish to see Va-m'rai as I am?" and En-ro, looking closely, shuddered. About her waist the negress wore a girdle of leaves, but except for that was entirely naked. Below the girdle her skinny legs seemed scarce able to bear her weight; above it her breasts hung flabby and pendulous on her gaunt ribs. From her bent and stooping shoulders swung scrawny arms that ended in veined and knotted hands, twisted and drawn like the talons of some bird of prey, and on those shoulders, bowed with heavy toil, her head, with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, quivered and shook with palsy. En-ro stared in horror at this frightful apparition, the woman repeating in a husky voice:

"Would you see Va-m'rai such as I?"

"Great Father!" breathed En-ro. Then:
"Who are you?"

The negress cackled again, lowered herself shakily to the ground, and when seated replied:

"Meng's wife! One of his wives; the first."

"Meng's wife!" repeated En-ro, amazed and puzzled, and she nodded.

"His first. Looking at me now, would it come in your mind that I was once young and beautiful? Nay, answer not! I have read the answer in your face!" And she cackled again, then went on: "I was once young and strong and beautiful; beautiful, perchance, as Va-m'rai, for all my skin is black and you would not think to compare me with her. But on an evil day my father sold me to the Bison for wife; sold me for three bear-skins, a necklace of bear's claws, and the carcasses of ten wild sheep—a good price, was it not? Great feasting was there that day! And twice ten and two children have I borne the Bison, and hard have I labored, carrying water, curing skins, doing the work of two women; not that I loved labor (though I am not more lazy than another), but driven by blows and kicks and beatings."

She paused, and En-ro noticed that her body was marked by the scars of beatings, the scars left by the terrible, stinging, cutting lash of rhinoceros hide.

"And when my beauty faded," she went on, wheezing for breath, "Meng ceased to love me and made me slave to his younger wives, and beatings from them also did I take. And as each of them fades he takes another, even as he wishes now to take Va-m'rai for his sixth—but dares not while you are in life. And now, would you not see Va-m'rai such as I, take her from the hands of the Bison; take her far off, where he cannot reach you?"

And there was a certain dignity about the wretched woman as she gave her warning.

"Great Father!" whispered En-ro, then aloud: "But how can I? It is not even known to me where the Swift Runner is hidden!"

"The 'how' is in your hands; that I cannot tell you. But go you down that

path"—she rose to her feet and pointed with a shaking hand—"follow its twists and turns, and at the end you will come upon a clearing. Fronting the path is a great oak, its heart rotted with age, and in the hollow is Va-m'rai. Oh, fear not for her yet. She is well fed, well cared for—Meng would not harm her beauty!—and not till you are gone will he take her to himself."

"But why do you, Meng's wife, tell me this? Is it for love? For jealousy?"

"What am I, to be jealous? And I do not love you or Va-m'rai—what cause have I for love?"

"Why, then?"

The negress looked steadily at the white warrior, her breast heaved, her skinny form shook, and leaning nearer she hissed:

"For hate!" and was gone, swallowed up in the forest.

En-ro stared after her for a time, then turned and gave more food to the Red God, and as the flames leaped up again he sat down by the fire to think, to plan, to find some way of freeing the girl he loved. And as he watched the leaping flames he sighed, for he had little hope that the Ta-an would come to his aid; he knew the power of the priests, and it did not seem to him that Snorr could sway the tribe against them; no, he was doomed to be a wanderer, an outcast all his days, or else take up his home among the Little Hairy Men whom he despised.

But it would be sweet to be received again among his own tribe—resolutely he put the thought away and bent all the force of his powerful mind to planning the rescue of Va-m'rai.

Of a sudden he heard a light step behind him and whirled instantly, grasping his ax.

"Ba-non!" said some one, and he saw that it was Nu-kzen.

"Welcome, Nu-kzen!" cried En-ro, as the little negro drew near, grinning his inevitable cheerful grin. "What news?"

"Evil news, Master!" said Nu-kzen, sitting down by the fire. "Evil news—and good, together. But let me rest awhile; then we must make haste."

"I have found where Va-m'rai is hidden."

"Good!" answered Nu-kzen. "Now listen, Master. Reaching the Ta-an, Kenzan sought out the chief priest and told him of the Bison's offer. It was accepted; Meng is to have Va-m'rai, you are to be tortured till you tell the secret of the Red God—"

"That will be never!"

Nu-kzen shrugged his shoulders and went on:

"And then you are to be slain on the altar, for that you slew Men-ko; your heart is to be given to the Bison, and your carcass to the beast. That for the evil news. Now for the good.

"I had speech with Snorr, and a council was called, but I could not hear what was said, for I was guarded in Snorr's cave. A fine cave, Master! I was taken before the council, and showed them how to bring the Red God to life, showing them also what He will do. Snorr spoke, Ko spoke, and others, but I was taken away again and could not hear. In the end, the council split, the priests ranging themselves on one side, the warriors on the other.

"That night the twelve priests of the Mountain Cave People set out to find the Bison and receive you, bound. Next morning, learning of this, fifty warriors, led by Snorr, set out in pursuit. Escaping from my guards, I fled to warn you, passing the priests in the night, for"—with a touch of pride—"none can travel the forest as can Nu-kzen! But the priests are hard on my heels, no more than half a day's march behind. Oh, Master, leave this woman and save yourself! There are many women!"

"Leave her? Never!" And En-ro, cursing furiously, seized his weapons. "Nu-kzen, you have done well, but speak not to me of leaving her! A warrior of the Ta-an leaves not his chosen one while breath lives in his body! Is the forest ~~not~~ through-out?"

"Here in the lowlands, yes, but in the hills the rain is over and the wind has swept the trees. Why do you ask?"

"Because"—and En-ro ground his teeth as he answered fiercely—"if need be, I will loose the Red God to sweep it, and you and I and Va-m'rai and Meng and his warriors, and the tribesmen of the Ta-an shall

die before his wrath, sooner than the Bison shall have Va-m'rai! Come now; the sky is lightening to the dawn—we go to find my woman!"

He felt his girdle to make sure that he still carried the Star-Marked One; he looked to his weapons, ax, and throwing-stick he took in his left hand, lance in his right, dagger in his girdle, darts in the leopard-skin quiver over his shoulder; he cast a glance at the fire to be sure it would not spread, and took his way, Nu-kzen following doglike at his heels, toward the little path to which the Bison's wife had pointed the night before.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SON OF THE RED GOD.

THE sky was growing light, but under the trees it was still dark, with the dense, enfolding blackness of the forest night, a blackness that wraps one like a thick, furred skin about the head, pressing down and about on all sides, a stifling, smothering blackness, that yet holds vague gleams of light, half seen, half guessed—not light, indeed, but rather spaces less densely black than the deepest dark.

Behind them, as they turned their heads from time to time, En-ro and Nu-kzen could see, guiding them on their desperate errand, the glow of the dying fire, leaping occasionally into small dancing flames as some stick, burning through, fell with a crackle, throwing a shower of tiny sparks into the air.

Above them the tall trees spread a domed ceiling of arching boughs, through the openings of which, vaguely outlined in ragged forms against the blue of the sky, shone and winked the stars, and once En-ro, turning and lifting his eyes, caught a glimpse of Ku-no-en-m'rai-ten-no, the Guiding Light of the Night That Does Not Move, the star that does not rise or set, the star by which the warriors of the Ta-an were taught to steer their way through the trackless forest.

The clear, fresh, sweet scent of dawn came pleasantly cool to their nostrils, and insects buzzed and hummed through the air; sleeping birds chirped in their dreams,

and the Devils of the Air fluttered through the little glade, one even swooping so close to En-ro's head that its wing-tip brushed his ear and he stopped for an instant in fear and horror; then, gathering his strength and courage, pressed on.

Once a roosting bird lost his balance and fell from the tree where he slept, catching himself in mid air with a squawk and a flutter, and the two men stopped in their tracks, listening to see if any of Meng's warriors had been roused by the noise, but no one stirred, and presently they went on, treading lightly and testing the ground before them for betraying twigs and leaves before resting a foot firmly.

From a distance there came to their ears the fierce hunting roar of Snorr-m'rai-no, followed by the agonized scream of a wild horse as the great beast of prey dragged it down, and Nu-kzen poked his master in the back, as though to remind him of what waited for them, once they had left the negroes' camp.

Presently they came to the hither end of the path the Bison's wife had pointed out to the Carver of Tusks, and Nu-kzen, drawing close, caught En-ro's arm. Placing his lips close to his master's ear, the little negro whispered—hardly more than breathed a few words, En-ro listening, half guessing at the message.

"Ba-non," said Nu-kzen, "is it in the hollow oak that your woman is hidden?"

"Yes," spoke En-ro softly, nodding.

"I am a fool, Master! I should have known! But see, we can reach the oak nor follow the path. Here the brush grows thin, and by crawling belly-down on the earth, as does Sen-zo, the Poisoned Slayer, we can avoid the guards Mang will have placed on the path. Let me go search!"

En-ro nodded again, and Nu-kzen, laying aside his single garment and taking only a flint dagger in his hand, flung himself on the ground and was instantly out of sight. En-ro lay down to wait. Time passed, the Carver of Tusks listening with all his ears, attention at utmost strain, fearing the sound of a struggle that would announce discovery.

The tension grew more and more painful, for as the light grew and he could catch

glimpses of vague forms about him, these forms took shape in his mind. The twilight was peopled with enemies creeping, creeping, surrounding him, warriors, beasts, devils, strange, nameless Things, forms he could recognize, forms he could not make out; they swam and shifted and danced before his eyes, till En-ro was ready to leap to his feet and rush upon them, to die fighting.

Then he shifted his eyes, closing them for an instant, and opening them, saw that the forms had changed and were still, and he knew them for creatures of his brain.

So he lay, his faculties tense, his nerves strained, his attention concentrated—and suddenly a hand was laid on his arm! Barely could he keep from screaming, but he held himself firm, though all his strength could not keep back a shudder. Slowly he turned his head, and as he did so a voice breathed in his ear: "Master!"

It was Nu-kzen.

"You found?" asked the white warrior.

"We can pass the guards who are on the path. One watched at the hollow tree."

"And we can pass him?"

Nu-kzen chuckled faintly, and En-ro could see in his mind's eye the inevitable flashing, white-toothed grin.

"He will not trouble us," answered the little negro, laying the blade of his dagger on En-ro's arm, and En-ro felt that it was wet.

"Come, Ba-non," said Nu-kzen. "On your belly, and let not your weapons clink."

En-ro stripped off his leopard-skin and wrapped his weapons in it, all but his dagger, taking care that a thickness of the hide lay between each two weapons, and Nu-kzen did likewise. Then, each taking his dagger in his teeth, the two flung themselves on the ground, the negro leading, and crawled, dragging themselves along by elbows and toes, into the underbrush.

If it had been dark in the open forest, here under the bushes it was doubly, trebly dark, for all the coming down. Here not the faintest ray of light penetrated, the stars were hidden, close over their backs the brush joined, and time and again En-ro would have lost his guide but for one hand resting on the negro's heel and leg.

And now En-ro was glad of the rain, for,

the ground still wet, the leaves and twigs did not rustle as when dry and crisp. The wet ground was cold and clammy, and in places there were patches of mud and sodden leaf-mold, but discomfort was naught beside safety.

So the two crawled on, and soon En-ro had lost all sense of direction; trained to follow the stars, he was not so keen an animal as the little negro, who could orient himself without other guide than that strange sense whereby the beasts find their way, wherever placed.

Suddenly Nu-kzen halted, a sickening odor of musk came to En-ro's nostrils, and he heard the warning hiss of a deadly viper. Nu-kzen picked three or four leaves from the ground, chewed them vigorously for a moment, and spat violently in the direction of the sound.

En-ro was conscious of a pungent, penetrating smell, not unpleasant, and he heard the serpent rustling away through the bushes.

Nu-kzen resumed his slow crawl, En-ro following close behind. On and on they crept, till by and by the bushes drew farther apart, thinned out, and En-ro could make out through the gloom a vague light ahead.

A dozen paces more, and they were in a clearing larger than most of those that lay about the central space; roughly, a circle some fifty or sixty paces across, with a great oak directly opposite the two, and on their right the path from the central clearing.

In the face of the oak toward them was an opening nearly as high as a man's head, and before it lay a dark body—the guard—huddled grotesquely where he had fallen from the blow of Nu-kzen's dagger. On his face he lay, one leg extended full length, the other drawn up with bent knee, under his body, his left arm flung out, his right resting on the back of his neck.

As they drew near En-ro could see a dark stream that had trickled from under the body, to sink into the ground an arm's length away.

"He knew not his death," whispered Nu-kzen. "I came on him from behind, reached across his body, and struck upward."

En-ro grunted approvingly and passed into the hollow tree, where Va-m'rai, ankles tied, lay on her side, her legs drawn up, for there was not room within to stretch out. The Carver of Tusks broke a fragment of wood from the tree and dropped it gently on the sleeping girl's bosom.

Instantly she was awake and looked up with frightened eyes; then, seeing who stood before her, leaped to her feet, her mouth opening for a cry; swiftly En-ro laid a hand on his mouth, and she was silent, but hobbled to him as he stepped to meet her, flinging her arms about his neck and clasp ing him tight.

His arms were about her, her head pressed against his bosom, and he could feel her body shaking with her sobs. Gently he raised her head and looked in her eyes, tears of joy and happiness streaming from them, and their lips met in a long kiss. Leaning back against his circling arms, the girl whispered:

"My love! My love!" and could say no more.

"Quiet, Va-m'rai!" warned En-ro. "Quiet and swift! We must go!"

Stooping, he cut the thongs that bound her ankles, and they passed out from the hollow tree. Even as they stepped outside Nu-kzen raised his voice:

"Swiftly, Master! They come!" And En-ro, looking about, saw—for by now it was light in the clearing—a dark warrior stride from the path on the left.

"Ken-zan!" cried the little negro, and the approaching warrior raised his head. Behind him came another, then another, and after them the huge form of the Bison; followed others and still others, pushing and crowding—white men, clad in skins, horns of deer and wild cattle on their heads—the priests of Ta-an!

"This is the end!" cried En-ro. Turning, he laid his dagger in the girl's hand. "Va-m'rai, be not taken alive!" And her grip closed over the sharp flint as she answered:

"Daughter am I to a chieftain of the Ta-an! Fear not for me!"

Stooping, En-ro seized his leopard-skin from the ground, and with a twist unrolled it, the weapons falling from the folds; he

grasped his ax, even as Meng, seeing his enemy before him, and the girl free, rushed with the bellow of rage at the Carver of Tusks.

But before En-ro could move to meet him, Nu-kzen, armed but with a dagger, leaped to defend the master whom he loved, and fronted the Bison. Roaring, Meng thrust fiercely at the little negro with his ax, and Nu-kzen reeled backward; the great ax whirled in the air and fell—the blow took Nu-kzen on the shoulder, and he fell, asprawl, his arms flung wildly abroad; the ax had turned in the Bison's hands, but the terrific blow, even striking flatwise of the blade, had crushed the little negro's shoulder, smashing collar-bone and ribs, and driving the shattered bones into the lung. Blood gushed from Nu-kzen's mouth as he lay, and Meng rushed on.

"Alive! Alive! Slay not!" shouted the priests, but Meng, blind with rage, cared for naught but to come to grips with the man he hated and feared, the man who had shamed him before his own warriors, the man who had defied him, who had taken his honor from him, and, heedless of the shouts, he dashed across to where stood the Carver of Tusks, waiting, quiet and self-contained, only his gleaming eyes showing the lust of battle that filled his bosom.

Above, among the trees, the birds chattered and sang as though peace ruled through all the world; in the clearing the mists of dawn rolled and billowed, rising from the ground, sweeping about the forms of the two enemies, half hiding them from the sight of the warriors and priests who pressed closer to see the fight; a dozen paces away, Nu-kzen, conscious once more, raised himself to sweep from his eyes the fog of death that was spreading over them, that he, too, might watch the duel; vaguely, in the tense silence, En-ro heard a shout, far off, ring through the forest; fiercely the Carver of Tusks glared at the Bison, and not less fiercely, foam dribbling from his lips, the Bison glared back from where he had halted three paces away.

"Ape-man!" taunted En-ro. "Ape-man! Coward! Torturer of women! Woman! You shall carry water for me and cure skins before my cave!"

Shaking the foam from his chin, screaming with anger, the Bison whirled up his ax and leaped toward his foe. Warily En-ro watched, and as the ax swept down he leaped back—in again—and Meng, bleeding from a gash on the thigh, fell back a pace, as En-ro followed, his own ax raised.

But the Bison was no new-fledged fighter; as En-ro's ax fell the blow was turned and Meng's weapon jabbed at En-ro's face—the Carver of Tusks jerked his head aside and the sharp blade tore his ear.

So back and forth they fought, feinting, dodging, striking, advancing, retreating, ever seeking an opening, ever striving to land a deadly blow, till both were weary and blown. Both were bleeding from a score of cuts, little cuts that none the less drained their strength away, and both were panting; blood and sweat mingled and ran down their bodies, the salt taste of the sweat was in their mouths—still back and forth they fought.

Closer and closer pressed the watchers, and Va-m'rai still crouched against the oak, her hands, gripping the dagger, held tight to her bosom. The sharp edge of the flint had scratched her skin, and a trickle of blood flowed down her breast—she did not know it, so intently did she watch the fight!

Suddenly her stifled cry came to En-ro's ear—dodging, he had caught his heel in a projecting root—he flung out his arms to catch his balance—the ax flew from his hand—he fell! The Bison, a grin stretching his thick-lipped mouth, sprang forward, lifting his ax for the blow that should end the fight—En-ro rolled swiftly over and over—seized his ax, and leaped to his feet—the Bison's ax swept down, struck the ground—he tugged to free it—saw death coming on him—flung up his arm, screaming—and En-ro's ax, driven with all the strength of his powerful arms, driven with hate behind it, struck full and square between the Bison's shoulders!

The Bison pitched forward on his face, coughed, grunted, and lay dead at En-ro's feet. En-ro freed his ax, leaned heavily on it, panting, and looked about him at the ring of faces, mingled white and black, that surrounded him.

For a time—for perhaps ten breaths—no

one moved or spoke; the only sounds to be heard were the songs of the birds, the labored breathing of the victor, and the choking coughs of Nu-kzen, as he lay where he had dropped from the Bison's blow. Then the chief priest, Ja-men-ka, elected after En-ro's dart had slain Men-ko, stepped forward and raised his hand.

"Take him!" he cried, but before any could move another voice spoke, behind the ring of priests and blacks, exclaiming:

"Stop!" and through the crowd came the form of Snorr, Great Chieftain of the Ta-an, thrusting aside those who stood before him, even as a swimmer throws aside the water, and the crowd parted to let him pass, as the water parts before the swimmer's breast. Ranging himself beside En-ro, he faced the priests and warriors, crying:

"Look about you!"

Negroes and white men, priests and warriors, they turned as one man, to see filing from the debouching path the fifty plumed warriors of the Ta-an, their oiled bodies glistening, the polished flint of their lances sparkling in the morning light that flooded the clearing. Silent but for the martial stamp of their feet on the ground and the click and clink of their anklets of shells and claws, these encircled the group, and at a word from Snorr each man brought his lance to level, the points directed inward to form a wall, breast-high, of sharpened flint.

Then, and only then, did Snorr turn to En-ro.

"Carver of Tusks," he said, "your messenger, who now lies there, brought word to us that you can command a strange new god, till now unknown to men; that this god serves you, that he will warm you in the Long Cold, and that he will fight for you; and your messenger told us also that it is your will that the Ta-an shall know of this god, and that he shall warm and aid the People of the Mountain Caves. Did he speak truth?"

En-ro, still breathing heavily, bowed.

"Warriors of the Ta-an!" cried Snorr, turning again to the crowd, "an ancient prophecy, known to but few among us, proclaims that there shall one day rise among us a warrior who shall command the gods; the prophecy bids us serve him, obey him,

and worship him, making him Great Chieftain of the Ta-an. I, who am your chieftain, obey the words of the Great Father. See now!" And he turned once more to En-ro, laying at his feet the carved wand of the tooth of Do-m'rai, the Hill That Walks, the baton of ceremony, the badge of chieftainship.

"Great Chieftain of the Ta-an," said Snorr, "I bow to you and entreat your favor." And kneeling, he lifted En-ro's foot and placed it upon his own head. "Give your commands; shall we, your servants, slay these men or let them live?"

En-ro stooped and took the baton, looked about him proudly, albeit a bit dazedly, and answered:

"Slay not; let them depart and come no more among the People of the Mountain Caves."

Instantly the ring of warriors parted on the other side, the lances pressed in toward the opening, and negroes and priests together were driven toward the path. Returning, the warriors knelt before En-ro, who gazed upon them, seeking words. Va-m'rai rose from where she crouched and drew to his side, laying her hand timidly upon his arm; his arm went about her waist and he drew her close; with his free hand he raised Snorr from where he knelt, and spoke aloud:

"Warriors of the Ta-an!" he cried, "I accept the high office; in war and in peace I will lead you, and we shall make the name of the Ta-an known and feared far and wide, far as the words of men are carried, even to the Land of the Dying Sun, the home of the Little Hairy Men! Your honor is mine; my honor is yours, and while breath lives in my body never shall I cease to labor and to fight for my people."

Snorr raised his arm:

"Men of the Ta-an, greet now your chief!" and a cry rang through the forest as the warriors tossed their lances high into the air:

"Long life to En-ro, Great Chieftain of the Ta-an!" But Snorr raised his hand once more.

"No longer En-ro, Carver of Tusks," he spoke, "but henceforth and forever Na-t'san, the Son of the Red God." And once

again the forest heard a shout; deep, full-throated, from the warriors:

"Long life to thee and thy bride! Long life and honor and happiness to Na-t'san, our leader, Great Chieftain of the tribe of Ta-an, the Son of the Red God!"

A month had passed; the Long Cold had closed in, and the days were growing shorter; Co-sa, the Ice, had locked the streams and built his bridges, cold and hard and glittering, over the pools; Sa, the Snow, had come in flurries, drifting among the rocks, heaped by the wind in piles that shone white in crannies and crevices; long since the squirrels had stored their winter's food, and Mo, the bear, had hidden himself for his long sleep; the Long Cold was upon the People of the Mountain Caves.

The sun was sinking toward the western hills when the Great Chief of the Ta-an, the Son of the Red God, climbed the mountain toward the altar whence—ages ago, it seemed—he had rescued Va-m'rai. He wished to be alone, to think and plan, and, reaching the altar, he seated himself upon a stone, his elbows on his knees, his chin supported in his hands, gazing abroad over the fair valley that lay below him, stretching far and wide on either hand, rolling down, then rising once more with gentle sweep to the distant hills that, a far blue wall, stood outlined against the deeper blue of the sky.

But the chieftain, seated, did not bend his mind to labor; a mood of reverie took him, and, sitting there, he drifted back over the happenings of the past few months, busy months, filled with struggle and effort, with danger, trial, battle, and, in the end, triumph.

He smiled proudly as he thought of the shouts of the tribesmen; the triumphal journey homeward, the finding of his cave, whence the sealing rocks had been rolled away.

And then he thought of Meng, and his muscles tightened and his eyes flashed as he remembered the great fight, and the blow that had brought him victory, and from the Bison his mind drifted to Nu-kzen, faithful, as he had sworn, even to death, and something rose in his throat and choked him as

he remembered how the little negro had pressed the hand of his kneeling master and had smiled even as the bloody foam rushed to his lips and his brave spirit started on its journey into the Long Dark.

By now the sun had set, and it was growing dark, and below him, dotting the slope of the mountain, the chieftain could see the twinkling fires of the tribesmen, for each man had got him a flint and hammer-stone and had learned the secret of calling the Red God to life; it was no part of the chieftain's plan to keep this knowledge to himself; he felt within him the power of invention, the power to lead and to command, and he meant to give this and all other knowledge freely to his people, that they might grow in strength and wisdom.

And now the mood of reverie left him and the spirit of prophecy came upon him, so that he saw visions; the valley and the fires drew back and faded before his eyes as though a veil were drawn across, and through this veil the chieftain saw dimly vague forms, crowding, thronging, fighting great battles, doing great works, armed with strange weapons, using strange tools; a pressing, mighty nation, spreading to the uttermost limits of the world, rich and powerful, strong and great.

He thrilled, his bosom heaved, his breath came hard, and he rose to his feet; erect he stood, raising his arms to the heavens.

"Oh, Great Father," he prayed aloud, "let Thy spirit descend upon me; grant me strength and patience, wisdom and might, that I may in very truth be deserving of this great honor that is mine; that well and truly may I serve my people to the end of life!"

And as if in answer to his prayer the wind was stilled, and in the silence, the utter silence of the lonely mountain, the chieftain felt a great peace descend and wrap him about, enfolding him, filling his bosom and flooding through his veins.

And slowly the vision faded, and slowly, with bent head, humbly yet proudly, Na-t'san the Son of the Red God, guided by the gleaming, twinkling fires of his people, took his way down the mountain to the cave where Va-m'rai, the tender, the brave, the true, awaited his coming.

Doggie

by



William
Merriam Rouse



DOGGIE BULL ate with a skilful use of his knife and as much speed as was consistent with the greatest pleasure. His broad shoulders bent over the kitchen-table in the earnestness of his effort to enjoy to the utmost the salt pork and boiled potatoes, bread, and milk gravy, which his mother had offered him, steaming hot and savory. Next to hunting, Doggie preferred eating as an occupation.

Mrs. Miranda Bull sat opposite her son and stirred her tea with the honest satisfaction of a woman who has done a week's washing. She was a lean, bent figure, with the general look of seasoned oak: and she was as tough as oak, despite an accumulation of sixty-odd years. Her hands were as well acquainted with the hoe and the ax as they were with the wash-board and the dish-pan: that was why there had been new potatoes to cook and kindling to build the fire that cooked them.

Doggie, who objected less to this soubriquet than to his real name, Sidney, knew with supreme indifference that he owed the clean, stomach filling meal nine-tenths to the labor of his mother. She did not work for other folks, which might have hurt his pride; but she tended the house and garden and stretched as far as possible what money filtered to her from trapping in winter and fishing in summer.

According to such philosophy as Sidney Bull had formulated a man was as much of a man as he could prove himself in a fight

—neither more nor less. Also he had a grievance against his mother; and she had one against him.

"Guess I'll go get some squirrels this afternoon," announced Doggie, after he had looked around the table for pie and sniffed the air in a vain hope that he might catch an odor from the pantry.

The face of his mother was habitually set with lines of disapproval but they deepened a trifle as she seized the teapot and poured herself another cup.

"You might get a job if you was to look—they're hiring men for the winter now."

"There you go again—every wash-day all I hear about is a job!" This was her grievance against him and he had heard about it for the past ten years—ever since the law had let him out of school.

"Well!" snapped Mrs. Bull. "Anyway, keep off the Gardners' land. Folks say they're going to open their house for the fall hunting, and they'd as soon have a man arrested as not for trespassing. Thank goodness, none of our folks was ever arrested!"

"Don't you worry about me!" Doggie, who had got up, tightened the belt about his lean waist with a swagger. "I ain't been caught yet!"

"And get back for supper on time, if you're coming at all!" she warned. "I can't abide having a meal of victuals kept waiting on the back of the stove!"

Up to this Sidney Bull had remained

good natured, in spite of the introduction of the threadbare and dangerous subject of work. But the mention of time brought to his mind, by association, the desire that had tormented his thoughts ever since that dim past in which the calamity of his father's death had overtaken them. His naturally firm jaw set harder and his head lowered slightly.

"The only watch I got is the sun," he growled, "and that don't stay up long this time of year!"

"And that's the only watch you'll get as long as I'm top of the ground!" Mrs. Bull straightened up in her chair as though to brace herself for battle. "Not unless you go to work and earn you one! You ain't going to lay hands on the beautiful watch your pa paid seventy-five dollars for—not while I live!"

That watch was the open wound in Doggie's imagination. It had a gold hunting-case engraved with the head of a stag and a scroll for the owner's initials; but it ticked uselessly from a nail above his mother's bureau and it seemed certain to tick on in that place until she passed out of this world. He had tried persuasion, trickery, and then a dark hint of leaving home forever—and all to no purpose.

Of course he could have taken the watch by force but this solution did not occur to him any more than it would have occurred to him to kick his own dog.

The watch was necessary to his being. Without a good watch he lacked something in self-respect. He could hardly think of a man in the county who did not carry a good watch, even though it might be enclosed in a silver or nickel case, while he was obliged to beg the time when the sun failed him. He had never got enough money ahead to buy anything better than a cheap, turnip affair that failed its duty within a few weeks. He had abandoned that sort of experiment; and given himself over to bitterness that his father's single heritage should hang unused because of an old woman's whim. He was a man going on thirty and she would not trust him with what belonged to him by rights! Even Turkey Walker, who had done time in the penitentiary, had a first-class set of works!

Thus Doggie worked himself up to a sullen rage against fate as he got his coat and rifle, and filled his pockets with cartridges. He didn't much care if he did get arrested for shooting squirrels on the land of those rich New York hogs, the Gardners; it would mean a jail sentence and perhaps the old woman would feel differently about the watch when he got out. Yet he knew that she wouldn't and realized that he was childish to think of such a thing—and this realization made him furious.

"You keep the damned watch!" he barked, as he strode out of the house. "But you keep still about a job, too, or I'll put a bullet through the cussed thing!"

He meant that; and he knew she would know from his tone that he meant it. It would worry her—maybe she wouldn't nag about tying him up to a plow handle.

He felt a little better as he swung off through the keen autumn afternoon: the mountains were blue with a color that made him ache and the woods lay brown and crisp before him. His head went up and his natural springing ease of movement returned to his muscles. And half an hour later he picked his first gray squirrel out of a tree on which was nailed the weather beaten notice of John Gardner that trespassing was forbidden.

Doggie had just put the squirrel in his coat-pocket and was walking lightly with his gaze searching the branches for another when his quick ear caught the sound of a footstep. Instantly his rifle went into a waist-high clump of young hemlocks and he began to move in a circle with the deliberate effort to make as much noise as possible. The person he had heard came nearer, hesitated, and then appeared in a frame of parted undergrowth as one of the most effective surprises Sidney Bull had ever received.

He saw a girl who might have been anywhere between twenty and twenty-five and who looked him straight in the eye with a cold, inquiring glance; as though she had a right to be there and knew very well that he did not. Not this, however, was the cause of his surprise. Up to that moment he had not known that such a creature existed in the same world with himself.

There were pretty girls in the mountains, true, and occasionally he had seen handsome women from the city; but this girl combined human beauty as it was known to his experience and a certain quality which he had associated with the lithographed angel in a picture which his mother cherished and which bore the legend "Not Lost, But Gone Before."

Doggie was not embarrassed: he was stricken into a state of momentary helplessness. Moreover, he was puzzled. The girl before him wore a rough cloth suit that had seen some exceedingly hard wear: her gloves were scratched and her boots were battered. She did not wear the kind of clothing that the rich people he had seen wore in the woods. His mind could not place her any more than his tongue could find anything to say while she stood there searching his face. It was she who spoke first, and with the faint hint of a smile about her eyes.

"Is the hunting good?" she asked, in a voice that had the ring of silver. Doggie admired that voice even as he felt the shock of her inquiry. He hoped to look injured and innocent, but in spite of himself his chin drew in with a little belligerent jerk.

"Hunting, miss? They say so, but I don't know much about it first hand."

Was she laughing at him? Or was the now distinct smile in her eyes one of mere friendliness? She came out of the bushes and stood at ease, with her hands thrust into the pockets of her worn jacket.

"I suppose you're picking out a Christmas tree, or something like that?"

"Me? No, miss. I'm looking for wintergreen. It's—it's powerful good for rheumatism." Doggie's confusion had led him into a slip of the tongue here, but he kept a bold front in the confident belief that the girl would not know whether wintergreen was good for smallpox or measles.

"So you have rheumatism?" she questioned gravely.

"Me? Oh, no! But ma's had it for about twenty year, I guess."

"Oh!" Her interest waned for an instant, as she appeared to be studying the ground, and then revived. "What do you do for a living, I wonder?"

At this point Sidney Bull remembered that he was a free born American citizen and his backbone stiffened. What right did she have to ask him his business? Who was she, anyway? What if he asked her the same thing? But he answered.

"I fish some—and—work around—and trap in the wintertime."

"I see," reflectively. "Do you want a job?"

This subject was the last in the world that Doggie cared to discuss, naturally, and he sparred.

"A job? Maybe you're from the Gardners' place?"

"Yes."

"A kind of housekeeper?" he guessed. "Or something like that?"

"Yes," she replied, after a moment.

"Well," explained Doggie. "I'm used to being out of doors all the time and I wouldn't be any good around the house."

"This job would keep you out all the time."

"And I have to be home with ma a good deal," he went on, as though she had not spoken. "Ma's over sixty, and—"

"You'd have plenty of time to yourself."

"And—" Doggie stopped, with his breath coming faster as he searched in vain for ideas.

"You're familiar with firearms, of course?"

"Me?" he cried with a great sense of relief. "No, miss, I don't handle guns much if any, at all!"

"I thought I heard cartridges rattle in one of your coat-pockets," she said with mock astonishment, "and I imagined I saw the tip of a squirrel's tail sticking out of the other—"

"What?" He thrust his hand into the squirrel pocket and, although he felt himself growing red, lied manfully. "Nothing there but a bite of lunch ma give me before I left—"

He broke the sentence, with his gaze going beyond her and slowly taking on a certain hardness. He knew that his expression must have changed for he read a reflection in her face: she turned half around and followed his eyes. Mose Tatro and Turkey Walker were padding over the

leafy carpet of a dried up gulley and they were grinning at him and the girl.

Now under any ordinary circumstances Doggie would have been glad to see the two men, and especially Mose Tatro. Bull admired Tatro, and stood a little in awe of him because he had succeeded in more dare-devil villainy than any other man for fifty miles up and down the New York side of Lake Champlain. He could bring a boat through the worst squall the lake ever knew, he was said to have knifed a man in the Maine woods, and he managed to have plenty of money without working. He had picked up Turkey for a follower and Turkey was trying to imitate him.

They came up familiarly and stopped, with unconcealed pleasure in their inspection of the girl. Doggie wished they were at the bottom of the lake. As for the girl she wore again that look of cold, self-confident inquiry with which she had greeted him.

There was consolation in that it appeared to be Walker and not Tatro who was interested to the point of pressing an acquaintance. Mose, broad, heavy featured but handsome, was used to admiration from the women he knew and when he did not get it from the girl he let his gaze wander in real or feigned indifference. Not so Turkey. He slouched nearer and thumped Doggie on the shoulder.

"Come on, Doggie, you old cuss! Who's your new girl?"

Sidney Bull could not have told why it made him white hot with fury to have this particular girl referred to thus by Turkey Walker. But it did; and the worst of it was that he did not know what to say. She stood there perfectly self-possessed, and silent, and waiting, while he was in a misery of rage and uncertainty.

"Lost your tongue?" Walker leered at the girl and winked at Bull. "Guess we happened along at the wrong time—"

If it had not been for the wink and the leer Turkey might have escaped the consequences of his tactlessness. They, however, swept all embarrassment and indecision away from Doggie—he lifted his right fist and drove a swinging blow against the mouth that had leered. Walker went

backward over a log with such force that his feet waved toward the heavens before gravity finally drew him to a limp repose. Mose Tatro, accustomed to sudden violence, remained impartially calm, although a little glitter came into his black eyes. The girl kept her poise, after an involuntary start at the cracking impact of the blow.

Doggie stood with his long arms ready and his body balanced for attack. He now felt quite capable of fighting a dozen men.

It was the freckled face of Turkey Walker that settled the affair—turned it from possible tragedy to comedy. Like an astonished red moon that face appeared to view, with no damage more serious than a cut lip. The girl laughed with the same ringing clearness that sounded in her voice. She snapped out a hand that had the firm quick grip of a man and wrung one of Sidney Bull's hesitant paws.

"Thanks!" she said; and without any other farewell she turned her back upon them and moved away—walking without haste but swiftly.

"Say!" Turkey Walker pulled himself up and sat on the log. "What's the matter with you, anyway?"

Doggie looked up, with the frantic consciousness of a blush, from contemplation of the hand that the girl had shook. In Walker's face he saw emotions which he understood perfectly. Turkey was willing to fight if there were cause for battle but he was not anxious, inasmuch as the man who had just knocked him down was known to be a very able person in any kind of physical conflict. Doggie had lost his wrath as soon as the girl laughed and it was with relief that he heard Tatro speak words of pacification.

"You fellers forget it!" He turned to Walker. "Can't you see Doggie's thinking about housekeeping? He's fell for the girl, so go easy!"

Turkey got up grinning and Bull took the hand that he offered. In a silence born of desire to get away from the topic of the near-quarrel the three of them filled their pipes from the same pouch and sat down upon the log.

"Girl was from Gardners' place, wa'n't she?" asked Mose.

"Ye-ah." Doggie drew a deep inhalation: He must have it understood once for all that she was different. "Nice girl—no nonsense about her. Kind of housekeeper, or something like that."

"They's another one up there, too," volunteered Turkey cautiously. "Looks like a nice girl, too. Family's coming to-morrow from New York."

"Going to stay long?" Sidney Bull was thinking with thankfulness of his narrow escape from a job and very little of the Gardners. He didn't care when or how they came or went—or did he care now?

"They think they're going to stay!" exploded Turkey with a dark mottling of rage. "Don't it beat the devil how some folks can have houses scattered 'round the country, full of silver and stuff, and folks like us—"

"Shut up!" barked Tatro. "You talk too much! That's what got you into the pen, you rummy!"

Walker subsided, grumbling to himself. Doggie now felt a mild interest, particularly as he noticed the serious expression on the face of Tatro.

"What's going on?" he asked. "Are they going to have Turkey put in the calaboose for hunting on their land?"

"I don't know!" Mose laughed. "How about you? Where's your gun, anyway?"

"Over there in them hemlocks," grinned Doggie. "I got to get it and start along—it ain't safe to shoot here now with a couple of girls loose and the Gardners coming."

"You bet it ain't!" agreed Mose, with great heartiness. "It ain't even safe to walk across their place—unless a feller's got a girl!"

Bull rather liked that. Of course he didn't have a girl but it gave him a pleasant feeling to think that somebody thought he had a girl like the one he had met there: he was extremely light hearted as he rescued his rifle and waved good-by to the others, already apparently getting ready to move.

He left the Gardner forest but, in spite of scarcer game, it was not long before he had enough squirrels for a meal. It seemed that his hand had never been as steady nor his aim as true.

It was on the way home that Doggie first really considered the girl and himself in relation to each other. Up to that time he had merely enjoyed the effect she had had upon him, without any attempt at self-analysis or any thought for the morrow. Now he began to wonder if he would see her again, and when, and how; and whether a girl like that would care to have a man like him get acquainted with her.

Of course he was as good as anybody but, just the same, there was a difference. She'd had more schooling, and had been around more. He wondered just what it was that she did for a living and how much she got paid for it. He had heard that the cook at the Gardners' had saved up a thousand dollars out of her wages, but he didn't believe it.

For the first time in his life Sidney Bull became a little dissatisfied with himself. He took stock and found that he possessed one rifle, one shotgun, one hound dog, and the clothes he wore. If he had had his father's watch he would have felt a little better; he could have displayed it carelessly as evidence that he was not as poor as a church mouse. But he didn't have it. And as he skinned and dressed the squirrels at home he experienced a revulsion of feeling.

What did it matter if his mother did hang on to the watch? He had been a fool to think twice about the girl he had met in the woods—she'd made a fool of him with her talk about an easy job when she knew he had one of Gardner's squirrels in his pocket. Like as not she was a spy, and they'd have a warrant out for him.

Well, he didn't care what happened to him—nor what happened to a girl that wandered around in the woods alone. With Mose Tatro and Turkey Walker in the same neighborhood—

Doggie Bull suddenly stopped feeling sorry for himself—his knife remained motionless and his head lifted. What were Tatro and Walker after up along that part of the shore? If they had carried rifles the answer would have been simple; but it was not a hunting expedition that had taken them to the Gardner acres that day. Neither one of them was a man to walk five or ten miles without a definite object.

Bull groped in the back of his mind for something he could not quite get at. There was a memory sticking there that was long in prying loose—long in taking coherent shape. At last he had it. Turkey had said something about silver and Mose had told him to shut up or he would get in jail again—that was the way Doggie remembered a conversation that had not engrossed his interest to any extent. And the talk had been about the Gardner place. He was sure of that much.

"Good Godfrey!" he muttered. "I wonder!"

Mechanically he finished the task in hand and went into the house, hearing in silence and as from a distance his mother's suspicious questions as to where he had found so many squirrels. He answered in monosyllables. He knew well enough that neither Tatro nor Walker was too good to rob the Gardner place if it were worth while and there was a good chance of getting clear. It must be that the two women had brought valuables with them. Then he thought of the women alone in the house with his cronies—and shuddered.

That morning Doggie would have shut his mind to the consideration of such a problem; he would have called it none of his business. But he had not met and talked with the girl then. Now he imagined the hands of Mose Tatro laid upon her and his own hand gripped his teacup with such force that it snapped and sent the burning liquid over his fingers.

"There you go!" shrilled Mrs. Bull. "Acting sullen and busting up the dishes jest because I won't give up your pa's watch! You ain't spoke a decent word to me since you come home!"

"Hey?" He looked at her stupidly, awakened from his reverie by the tea. "I ain't jawed every minute, either, have I?"

"Have you been drinking, Sidney Bull?" she demanded.

"No!" He got up from the table and put on his coat. "Wish I had something to drink!"

"Where you going to-night?" He knew from the suspicion in her tone that she was visioning an orgy. "I want to know!"

"Coon hunting!" He paused in the

doorway. "And as near as I can tell time by the moon I'll be home 'round three o'clock in the morning!"

Out of range of his mother's voice he walked more slowly, and thought. She and the breaking teacup had precipitated him into a course that he undoubtedly would have taken later in the evening under any circumstances—he could not well imagine himself sleeping while there was even a hint of danger to the girl at the Gardner place. The thing for him to do, therefore, was at least to take a turn around the house to see that all went well with the women there—he could even spend a few hours in the brush if he thought necessary.

His rifle was lying where it belonged across two pegs behind the kitchen stove and that was the best place for it, he decided, for if he should be caught on the Gardner land with a gun at night it might go hard with him. He cut a hardhack club as thick as his wrist and sauntered over the first mile or two. It was moonlight, and the barking of coon dogs came from the far distance. He was a fool, no doubt, to waste a good night like this; but the thought of the girl held him to his purpose.

This particular summer home of the Gardner family sprawled on the top of a rocky ridge. There were no neighbors within half an hour's walk and no easy means of access except the lake, which lapped ceaselessly at the cliffs a few hundred yards from the house. John Gardner had built a private road but he so seldom used his mountain cottage, and then for such short periods, that the road was in bad repair. Even supplies for the present visit had been brought by boat.

Doggie Bull chose to go as the crow flies, even though it meant more labor and probably less speed than a circuitous route. He would be much less apt to run into other prowlers by going through difficult ravines and over stubborn ridges. So, although he stopped only once or twice to smoke, it was nearly midnight when he came out upon the natural clearing about the cottage and halted for an inspection of the place.

Wide verandas ran nearly all about the house and he knew, from having seen it once or twice by daylight, that French

windows opened from the various rooms. At present the lower floor was dark but in one window of the second story a dim illumination showed.

From the looks of things the women must be all right. Now that he was here he was nearly of a mind to call himself a profanity trimmed idiot and go home; then he made up his mind to see the thing through. Tomorrow he would make it his business to find out what Tatro and Walker were up to and thus set his mind at rest. Anyway, maybe the Gardners would come and they should be able to take care of themselves.

He skirted the roughly laid out grounds once and came back to his starting point. This had taken all of half an hour of careful work, for natural caution led him to make his progress noiseless and invisible, and he decided to get some rest. At the foot of a big pine he lay down and wriggled comfortably into the mat of needles. From there he could keep his eye on the lighted window. He resisted the desire to smoke, and smothered a groan. Then he began to nod, and after a time the window bobbed out of sight and his head slipped down upon his crooked arm.

The rather faint protest of a bit of tortured iron would not have awakened a city man—much less would it have been distinguishable to his ears from the night sounds that were not caused by human beings. But Doggie Bull's head bobbed up and he knew that creak for the yielding of a lock or bolt, probably on one of the French windows.

Doggie crawled forward a dozen yards and waited. The sound was repeated, and this time he was able to locate it. Then he saw a dark show of movement on one of the porches and that decided him: he went as fast as he dared toward the back of the house.

What he had taken in his trip of inspection to be the kitchen door was farthest from the point of entry of the intruders. He would go in there, get up the back stairway, and reach the room of the girl. He told himself that he did not care a tinker's darn about anything that belonged to John Gardner—he would protect the girl and let the house take care of itself. Perhaps,

he hoped, he could keep her quiet and perhaps the burglars would not offer to molest her. Doggie had no desire to be a hero, or to seek a fight against odds.

He found the kitchen door locked, and a window near it half open. He chuckled as he thought of Mose and Turkey painstakingly breaking in. Then he was over the window ledge into the pantry, in the kitchen, opening doors as softly as he could with speed, and finally in an enclosed stairway. He reached the top in total darkness, stretched out his hands to locate the wall, and found himself blinking into the glare of a flash-light.

"Put your arms up straight over your head!" commanded the voice of the girl, and the ring in it this time was of tempered steel. "I don't know whether you can see it or not but I've got an automatic pistol!"

Doggie put his hands up and swallowed hard. He had not dreamed of any such possibility as this—and from below he could hear a sound which he felt sure was made by a rusty hinge on the window. In a few seconds it would be too late to do anything.

"Honest to God!" he stammered. "Miss they's two of 'em down-stairs—and I come in to help you!"

His eyes had now adjusted themselves in a measure: in the dim area behind the light he saw the shadowed face of the girl, the black outline of a pistol against the white of her hand, and in the background a second white robed figure—a slender form with a cloud of glowing hair and eyes that were big and bright and like those of a scared child.

As suddenly as she had held him up the girl apparently made up her mind to believe him. She turned and swung the light along the corridor in which they stood. He saw that it led through to the main stairway.

"Come!" she whispered. "Come, Rosine! I can hear them in the library!"

They ran to the head of the stairs. The flash-light struck down into the lower hall and rested upon the forms of Mose Tatro and Turkey Walker. Their feet were set upon the stairs, their faces upturned in

astonishment. While a man could breathe twice those above and those below stood motionless: then the girl fired. Simultaneously Tatro and Walker melted from sight—one into the library and the other down to the floor in the meager shelter of the stairs and the newel post. The front door answered to the thud of bullets and a splinter whizzed from the banisters. Silence, with the girl still pointing her weapon.

"Give me that gun and another clip of cartridges!" demanded Doggie hoarsely. "I'll get 'em out of here in jig time!"

She turned frightened eyes toward him; and the pistol trembled in her hand.

"I haven't got any more cartridges," she whispered. "I've shot them all away!"

So she was human, after all—which Doggie had begun to doubt. However, that was of little moment now: he had let himself in for something and he knew it with a knowledge which grew more vivid to his imagination every instant. It depended mainly on luck and the temper of Mose Tatro whether he got out of that house alive—unless he wanted to run or go over to the enemy. He took the flash-light into his own hands.

"What will they do?" asked the girl.

"I don't know," he murmured. "What are they after?"

He glimpsed her round, white arm to the elbow as she made a gesture toward the girl called Rosine. He saw now that Rosine carried a big, square leather case hugged close to her.

"Some jewels," she replied in a low voice. Then she added, as though it were an afterthought of no particular importance, "I am Mrs. John Gardner."

Doggie Bull took an involuntary step backward: he found it a relief to lean against the wall.

So the girl for whom he had been on the point of risking his life was the wife of another man—the wife of a rich man, and of that same rich man whom he hated because of posted acres of woods. A hog too mean to let people hunt or fish on his land!

She had made a fool of Doggie Bull—or had he made a fool of himself? He looked at her to see what it was that had

led him into such a scrape, and met a question in her eyes. The flash-light was sagging in his hand: he straightened up.

"Are you ill?" she whispered.

"No!" He swung the light searchingly downward and revealed the head of Mose Tatro peering out of the library doorway. Mose was taking a chance.

"Get out of sight or I'll drill a hole in you!" yelled Doggie. But Mose remained where he was, looking steadily up into the light.

"Why don't you take a shot now, Doggie?" he asked grimly. "I guess most likely something's happened to your gun, ain't it?"

"Come on and find out!"

"We're coming, all right!" Tatro, holding himself poised for a leap backward if his guess should prove incorrect, stepped full into the hallway. "Get up, Turkey! You ain't in no danger of dying to-night!"

Walker's puffed lip appeared over the top of the banisters. He blinked at the group at the head of the stairs.

"I told you we'd ought to brought a revolver, Mose!" he complained.

"Shut up, you rummy!" commanded Tatro. "How did I know Bull was going to make a sucker of himself?"

But Doggie had not yet decided to make a sucker of himself. He had, as a matter of fact, almost decided to bolt out of the back door and let the situation take care of itself—let Mrs. John Gardner and the pretty girl she called Rosine take care of themselves. Why should he risk his life to save jewelry that Gardner's money had bought?

Risking his life was exactly what it amounted to. Of Turkey Walker he had no fear. But Mose Tatro was a sinister enemy. Doggie had always tacitly acknowledged Tatro to be the better man in a fight, as had many another husky man of the neighborhood. Moreover, he was capable of pretty nearly anything.

Bull felt certain that Mose would not hesitate to kill the three of them if that seemed the best way to cover up his trail, and he would not be pressing the robbery to a finish if the booty were not worth all that he had to risk. The best the defender

of the house could hope for was a terrible beating. And there wasn't a thing in it for him.

Doggie Bull backed away from the head of the stairs with every intention of leaving the two women; but his eyes met the terror-filled, dependent gaze of Rosine and he heard the voice of Mrs. Gardner speaking as steadily as though she were talking to him about a job.

"Take the case, Rosine," she said, "and hide in the woods—anywhere. This gentleman and I will handle these thugs!"

"But no, madame!" protested Rosine. "I will n-n-never leave madame!"

Game! thought Doggie. He looked at Mrs. Gardner. She had called him a gentleman. Something swelled up inside of Doggie Bull and he felt like a balloon—light and big and able to get right up above such trash as the two men down there who had taken off their coats and were already on the first steps. Fight? He felt able to fight a herd of elephants!

"You take the flash, Mis' Gardner!" he snapped, as he stripped to his shirt. He caught the eyes of Rosine—eyes that could sparkle even if they were frightened—gaging the depth of this chest. "Nobody's going to say Doggie Bull run off and left a couple of women to be robbed!"

Mose Tatro came first, stepping very slowly and waiting for the man above to come down to him. Doggie did not like that at all. He wanted Turkey Walker out of the way once and for all before he fought Mose. So he held himself at the top of the stairs, as though he expected to do battle there, until Tatro, growing impatient, began to take the steps two at a time. Doggie waited until he was within three steps of the top and then, making as though to launch himself upon the attackers, he balanced on one leg and drove the other into Tatro's middle.

It was a dangerous chance to take but he was successful. Mose doubled up with a grunt and rolled to the bottom, almost carrying Walker with him. And while Turkey sprawled out against the wall to save himself from falling, Doggie fell upon him with joy in his heart and the determination to do the best job of whirlwind

fighting he had ever done in his life. He must, for Mose would be on his feet again in a few seconds.

When Mose Tatro got up, with arms swinging and his white teeth bared, Turkey Walker lay head downward upon the stairs with a broken arm and such numerous minor injuries that he would fight no more that night, nor for a long time to come. And Sidney Bull sprang lightly down to the hardest part of his task with nothing more serious than bleeding nose and fists.

They faced each other between the bullet scarred front door and the foot of the stairs; and almost at once Doggie found himself in a clinch. Tatro forced the desperate, close fighting of the woods, in which every wrestling hold, fair and foul, is used—in which the teeth seek for a thumb or finger and the thumbs try to search out the eyes.

A man not versed in that fighting would have been, in the hands of Mose Tatro, a bleeding wreck in less than a minute of time. But Doggie Bull knew as much as his antagonist, although he lacked the experience; and he had no scruple against using everything that he knew.

When they broke away each had had enough for the moment. Doggie conceived the idea of making it a different kind of a fight—one in which wind and endurance might tip the balance in his favor. He knew almost nothing of boxing—and he knew that Tatro was no better off in that respect. So he felt safe, when Mose showed a disposition to renew the battle, in launching a heavy but powerful blow that rocked Tatro to his heels. And Tatro replied in kind; from which Bull guessed that he had found more than he expected in the clinch.

Then began the long battle that later became historic in that township. Like flails their thick arms struck out and fell: like sledge-hammer blows their hardened fists reached face or neck or body. Neither man knew the art of avoiding a blow and neither man tried. They struck and struck, satisfied to take the pain of punishment for the pleasure of feeling a fist drive home.

They tried to clinch once again and fell apart from weakness. Doggie was glad of that. They planted their feet wide so that

they would not fall and stood facing each other squarely. Their movements grew slower and slower until at length there was an interval of seconds between each blow—and not one of them any longer had behind it sufficient power to floor a strippling.

Through the blood and tears and sweat that filled his half closed eyes Doggie saw the battered face of Tatro swaying before him. He saw the sopping redness of Tatro's shirt and the buttons that his blows had broken to bits. Would the man never go down? Only his own will held him up, and he knew that it must be the same with Mose. But with Doggie it was different—two women waiting up-stairs—and one of them had called him a gentleman.

Long after he had ceased to feel pain, or any other sensation but the leaden weight of his arms as he lifted them to strike, Doggie saw the hideous thing that had tormented him by staying on its feet sink down. He winked in order to see a little more clearly. Yes, Mose Tatro was lying down on the floor.

A scream rang in his ears. He reeled to the stairs; and there he had to sit down. The light that had remained steady through the long battle was growing brighter, coming toward him. More lights—he could tell that in spite of his closing eyes. He leaned back, and some one began to wipe his face with a damp, sweet smelling cloth.

"I tried—to be a—gentleman!" He managed to make his lips frame that much and then he yielded to a great desire to sleep.

Sidney Bull arrived home in time for dinner the next day. He heard his mother's

opinion of him and of fighting in a silence that was merely patient. It was not until he drew his chair up to the squirrel potpie that he got a chance to speak. Then, in an interval when Mrs. Bull was taking breath, he told her the news.

"Ma," he said, "I've got a job!"

There followed a silence that was broken only by the sound of his knife and fork. At length Mrs. Bull pushed her chair back from the table and let her hands drop to her lap.

"I don't believe it!" she muttered.

"It's true as gospel, ma. I'm going to work to-morrow for the Gardners—board at home and plenty of time to cut your wood, I guess."

"Sidney!" She leaned forward with her mouth drawn to a thin line and held his eye. "Be you lying to me?"

"Cross my heart, ma! You can ask 'em if you don't believe me!"

She got up and went into the bedroom. When she came out his father's watch, in all the glory of its ornate hunting case, dangled from her hand.

"That's all I been waiting for, Sidney," she said. "You take your pa's watch, and see that you take good care of it!"

She laid it in his limp hand and while he was still dumb with astonishment she dropped her head to the table and began to cry happily.

"Good Godfrey!" Doggie found himself unable to say more as, with trembling fingers, he draped the chain across his waistcoat. He really was somebody at last. But not the watch alone made him believe that. Rosine, less than two hours ago, had assured him that he was a hero.

AEROPLANES

I USED to grieve that from my window
Looking upward toward the sky
Where it arches o'er the city,
Never bird was seen to fly.

Now I gaze in awe and wonder
As I see them circle there,
Mighty birds, whose vast presages
People all the lambent air.

Mabel Martin.

The Torch

by Jack Bechdolt

Author of "Driftwood," "Salvage," etc.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

WHEN the modern world crashed into ruin in the great catastrophe of 1980-1980, a new race was born who reverted to medieval standards. That which was New York was now known as Manhattan, ruled over by a "Towerman," one Wolff the Great—the Tower people as they were called, keeping in subjection an inferior race known as the Folk, who inhabited the Sub-Ways, the ancient underground railway of the vanished civilization of the latter twentieth century.

Thus in the dark year 2078 one Fortune, petty captain of the guard, saved the wall from an invasion of the wild people, and for his deed was summoned before Wolff. The day prior to the attack half his company had been removed following the visit of a messenger who bore a ring with the device upon it, of a snake.

Proceeding on his way, accompanied by his servant, Ham, Fortune was interrogated by Frederick, the comptroller, who threatened him by innuendo when Fortune refused to divulge the character of the seal. As they went Ham chanted a rhymed prophecy, as follows:

Fortune the white,
Fortune the white
● shall rule in might
Till the Torch burns bright.

Then, later attacked by some road-menders, the young officer found one of them wearing a shirt of mail under his smock, and a ring bearing upon it the design of the serpent, and on arrival at the Towerman's headquarters had a quarrel forced upon him by one LeRoy. Something told him that these two events, following so closely, were the result rather of design than of accident, and this impression was confirmed when, after an interview with Wolff, his duel with LeRoy was interrupted by soldiers who led him before Alda, daughter of Wolff.

Swearing him to secrecy, she intimated that the conspirator was Frederick, and after his solemn assurance of fealty he, having been promoted to an overcaptaincy, and granted seven days' leave, visited the island where was the statue of the Great Woman, where he hoped to find a certain girl who had mightily beguiled him. He and Ham were about to take her by force when they were set upon by a giant, who pursued Fortune to the statue, hurling Ham upon the rocks. Fortune got out upon the immense shoulder, where he crouched, hiding, knowing now the feelings of a cornered rat.

CHAPTER VII.

COMRADES OF THE TORCH.

FORTUNE already had proved his courage better than that of the average soldier, but even a courageous man may be frightened at something outside his knowledge. The gigantic man who had pursued him to this giddy refuge on the shoulder of the colossal statue was a terror, beyond anything the young soldier had experienced. It was some time before his panic subsided and his mind began to question his predicament.

From within the metal walls of the Great

Woman came the noise of pursuers. Above him was only the evening sky, flooding slowly to a glowing palette of sunset color; underfoot the corroded metal plates bent into the semblance of a human form, but in proportions so great that the eye could only comprehend its plan from considerable distance.

His desire was to hide, to hide until darkness would be a partner to his escape—but where?

By an effort he conquered the giddiness caused by his height above the earth and, rising, walked cautiously about the gentle curve of the up-thrust shoulder, peering

This story began in The Argosy for January 24.

over fearfully into the ridges and valleys made by the folds of the Great Woman's drapery.

The slope of some of these folds seemed gentle enough for a man to crawl down them. He remembered now that when he was in his little boat, gazing up at the statue, he had seen a huge creeper dangling from the arm that clasped the tablet. Perhaps this great vine would sustain his weight—would prove a rope to let him into the forest.

With cautious steps he began retracing his path around the neck of the figure, keeping one hand against the metal wall of throat to give him confidence. This led him past the opening beneath the throat whence he had crawled out, and he hurried, fearful that his pursuer would reach out a giant arm to detain him. It added nothing to his confidence to note that the opening was quite large enough to emit even a man of huge proportion.

He realized that the need for hurry was desperate.

Staring down from the opposite side, he could see, beyond the swell of breast, the great niche made by the crooked arm, and he even glimpsed a bit of the creeper that had found anchorage there. To gain that niche he must slide his body down a long, funnel-like trough where the draperies of the figure creased. Even the thought of it made him dizzy. His knees grew weak.

Desperation forced him to the edge of the slope—forced him to thrust one foot downward, tentatively.

Then, beneath him, he caught a sight of a man's head. The head had been thrust out of one of those ragged holes in the vast metal structure. It disappeared, appeared again, and then the man crawled out cautiously, lowered his body, hands gripping the edge of the hole, and dropped.

From the height where Fortune peered any man would seem small, but there was something in his brief glimpse of this fellow that instantly impressed his brain as abnormal.

It was only a second's glimpse he had, for the body slipped down in a flash and Fortune knew the man had dropped into some niche of the metal work.

Instinct told him this man was moving to cut off his retreat.

On hands and knees Fortune peered far over the edge, his eye sweeping the contours for some sign of the man's progress. It came in a glimpse of moving shoulder, again a hand, gripping at the metal wall, and then a brief view of the back of the man's head. He was moving rapidly toward the very niche of the bent arm Fortune had selected for a refuge.

A loud shout from behind brought him instantly to his feet. He whirled about, drawing his sword, and ran back to the door in the neck of the figure.

A huge hand grasped either side of the portal, and in the dusk within Fortune caught the gleam of the giant man's eyes.

His sword flashed, quick as light, against the nearest hand, but the fingers were withdrawn so quickly that the blade only grated on metal. Keeping his body well to one side, Fortune began a desperate defense of the door, his flashing sword quick to dart toward any part of the big fellow's person that showed.

To his sudden astonishment a huge peal of laughter, magnified by the hollow metal walls to a thunderous roll, issued from his foe's throat.

"Well played, little wasp," the big voice rumbled. "Well played!"

"Back, you dog!" Fortune shouted, angry at being laughed at. "This wasp can sting—"

"Ho!" chuckled the giant, nevertheless keeping well out of sword thrust. "Ho! Yield you quietly, my wasp, or I'll flatten you under my foot. Will you come here and be killed in this spider's web, or must the old spider come out?"

"Come out, if you dare!" Fortune taunted.

"Why, I don't like your sting, Mr. Wasp"—his foe bared his white teeth in a grin—"nevertheless, I shall come get you when I'm ready, since your kind must be killed. I wonder do you soldiers of the Tower People ever attack men—ah, you would! Next time I'll grab your leg for that and pull you in! A brave young soldier truly—against young girls!"

Perhaps Fortune, in his rage, might have

ventured in to his death if there had not come another interruption at this moment. A yell of defiance caused him to wheel and charge with his sword toward the opposite side of the tower of neck.

The man whom he had seen creeping out of the statue had mounted to the raised shoulder and was defying him. In the moment he comprehended this Fortune saw that his new foe was crooked-backed, which gave him that peculiar dwarfed appearance he had noted before.

The crooked-backed man waited his coming confidently, brandishing his arms and yelling taunts until they were almost face to face, then he deliberately stepped back from the wide shoulder and cast himself over the declivity.

The suddenness of his disappearance made Fortune gasp. Had he thrown himself to destruction? He bent forward to peer over and saw that the other had merely slid, face down, along one of the metal troughs that represented folded drapery.

Then two mighty hands pinned his arms to his sides. He was picked up, as helpless as a child, and turned around until his face pressed against the giant's coarse cloth shirt. He had been caught by a trick!

A moment he suffocated in the folds of the cloth, his feet barely touching the metal platform, and he realized that, tall as he was, he came no higher than his captor's heart.

With all his might Fortune kicked at the pillarlike legs, but because his feet were clad in soft leather his kicks were as innocuous as a child's struggles. Then he was lifted higher, and the great arms extended him in the air for inspection.

There was a look of stupid good nature on his gigantic captor's face. Like some huge dog pawing at the wasp that has annoyed him, he seemed more puzzled and amused than resentful. Yet immediately Fortune knew his death was close.

"What did I say?" shouted the big man exultantly. "Now the old spider's got you, my wasp. You'll sting no more! We have no need of such poisonous vermin here, so—" Terrible, swift action completed the sentence. Fortune was swept high in the air, kicking and writhing impotently. With

a great rush he felt himself poised, his face to the sky, while the arms that held him slowly drew back and stiffened to hurl him into eternity.

He closed his eyes. His senses reeled.

"So!" boomed the great man.

"Shard!"

A woman spoke sharply, as one would address a dog. Fortune sensed a sudden hesitation in the other's purpose.

"Shard! Put him down. Put him down; you hear me?"

"Go back—go back, Mary," the giant muttered. "This is not for your eyes—"

"Put that man down!" The woman's command fairly crackled with will power. Fortune was lowered gently until once more his feet touched the metal plates.

"There," the voice went on, although he could not see the speaker because of the position in which he was held. "There, we'll have no more murders."

"But, Mary—dear Mary, listen, isn't this the man?"

"Yes, it's the man."

"He attacked you!" exclaimed the giant.

"And you did well to catch him, but let us have law here among the comrades. Are we Wild Folk, to kill this way! The law will take his life. Let him wait for a fair trial; we need not wait long for that."

"Better to kill him now and have done," grumbled the other, but he turned about, wheeling Fortune with him, and carried his captive through the door into the statue.

The woman had stepped back to let them pass. Fortune's eyes for a second met the wonderful gray eyes of the girl of the isle, but reading in them only contempt, he snatched his glance elsewhere.

Propelled by Shard's great hands he stumbled down interminable flights of the winding metal stair, through the gloom.

As they came opposite one of the holes in the ruin there was a shout and the face of the crooked-backed man peered in.

"Got him, eh?" he shouted.

"Aye, Tringe—but she won't let me kill him. Says he's to have a trial!"

Tringe swung himself through the hole and stood before Fortune, inspecting him critically. He looked like a gnome in that pale light, head thrust forward from his

bent spine, raising as homely a face as ever a man wore. Like his spine, his features were cruelly twisted so that the nose had no bridge, and the wide mouth was set slantwise across his cheeks. His eyes were brown and strangely luminous. They were large as a woman's eyes, and held a quick intelligence.

"A big fellow," Tringe observed coolly, as if Fortune were some sort of strange fish the other had hauled out of the sea. "An overcaptain, if that uniform doesn't lie. Why, Shard, this looks like the man Fortune—you know, the man who fought on the wall that I told you about?"

"Well, wherever he fought, he'll fight no more," rumbled Shard.

"Come," Tringe ordered, "is that your name? Are you Fortune?"

Fortune glared at his crooked little questioner. "Go to the devil!" he gritted.

"I believe it is he," mused Tringe. "Well, well, this is a catch. I must tell Zorn. Ho, Mary, is that you there in the shadow? What d'you think, this looks like that Captain Fortune who held the wall! Zorn must know of this."

Tringe clattered down the long stairs far ahead of them. The girl had made no reply. Fortune was pushed on by his giant captor.

At the foot of the long stair they passed through a room of considerable size, where several men pressed forward to stare and ask questions. Then they descended more steps of stone into a chilly underground warren of passages that ended at last in a small, stone cell. Into this Fortune was shoved without ceremony, and the thick wooden door slammed and bolted upon him.

Before that door was opened again, Fortune had regained his composure. Who these captors were he had no notion, but one thing was clear—for all their talk of a trial it was plain they meant to kill him.

He experienced a certain cynical wonder that any of the folk could be so banded together as to avenge a wrong against a mere woman. Among the Tower People such a thing might be expected, but for the Folk to talk of laws was something new.

He was prepared to die with all the dignity a soldier should display when his cell

door was thrust back and the gigantic man seized him rudely. He was hustled along various corridors and up-stairs, finally to be introduced into a lighted room where a tall, spare figure in a black robe sat at a table, reading a book.

So great was Fortune's surprise at finding this man engaged in what to-day would seem a simple, every-day act, that for a time he was blind to all other details. A book! Once he had seen a book such as the ancients used and examined it with lively curiosity, but little understanding.

He knew that books were made in characters different from the common handwriting which young officers were taught to understand and employ to a limited extent. Only great scholars possessed the key to the riddle of printed book pages. Never before had he seen a man read one.

If the man at the table had been turning water into wine or making diamonds from pebbles, Fortune could have been no more fascinated.

Shard grumbled in his throat to attract the reader's attention. "Comrade Zorn," he said respectfully, "this is the man who attacked Mary. You asked to see him?"

He addressed as Zorn laid aside his book with a sigh, methodically marking his page with a small knife that lay before him. Fortune was at once impressed by the vigor of the man and the keenness of his glance.

He wore no head covering and his hair was black on the crown, but white about his temples. It was close-cut. Beneath a noble forehead eyes of light-blue, rather deeply set, blazed with some hidden fire of thought.

Zorn's robe of somber black without an ornament, shrouded about his spare frame gave him an ascetic appearance which was enhanced by his pallid skin and the thinness of his tapering hands.

"Very good, Shard. Leave us alone." Zorn spoke quietly, and from his tone Fortune instantly recognized that this was no man of the Folk.

The giant shuffled undecidedly. Zorn gave him a quiet glance. Shard released his prisoner and left the room with the air of a stubborn and rebellious child.

"They tell me you are that young captain who held the wall against the Wild

Folk," Zorn began, appraising Fortune with his eyes.

Fortune hesitated. Suddenly released, he was at loss whether to fly at the man's throat and score at least one more death before his own occurred, or whether to attempt escape from the ruin. But Zorn's manner imposed Zorn's will on him. He answered as he would have answered Wolff himself, even adding an unconscious "Sir" to his words. "My name is Fortune; I held the wall, and I am an overcaptain in the army of the Tower People."

"You have broken our law, Captain Fortune," Zorn spoke without heat, rather musingly. "You must pay the penalty—you know that?"

Fortune shrugged. "I know no law of yours," he began disdainfully, but Zorn's look and words halted him.

"But you know right from wrong? It is only childish for you to quibble, captain. You deserve to die for what you have done, and doubtless your death will be the will of the comrades, yet"—Zorn stopped and watched Fortune narrowly, studying him.

"Let me remind you," said the prisoner finally, "that I am an officer of the army of the Directorate. I am a military servant of the high-born. If your people as much as touch me again—"

The other waved away the threat with a graceful hand. "You are wasting breath," he declared with contempt. "You cannot frighten us—we are not children here. Do not for a minute think, captain, that any consideration shown you is consideration for your rank or the Tower People. Here there are no Tower People. But, as a man, I am not sure but you do deserve more thought."

"It is true you have acted like a criminal," Zorn went on evenly, "and you should die like an outlaw. Yet, I can see you are young and you doubtless did according to your own conception of your rights. And you are intelligent—"

Fortune attempted sarcastic thanks. Zorn merely ignored the interruption.

"Do you know, captain, I am interested to try an experiment with you. If I could induce the comrades to spare your life, I—perhaps you could learn; perhaps you could understand what it is we are doing. If you

could be made to see—I believe—I believe you could be of great service to the cause."

"What cause?"

"You will see—perhaps."

"What do you want of me?"

"If anything beside your death it might be, possibly, your knowledge of military affairs. Your ability as a drill-master—"

"I owe allegiance only to Wolff," said Fortune stiffly.

"Certainly," Zorn agreed to the young man's surprise. "I would think less of you if you gave me another answer—at present. But if, after you had seen and understood for yourself, if then you could see the justice of what we are doing, you might be able to repay us by your service for your offense. After all, no harm is done. You merely acted like a beast because you know no better. Suppose we talk it over with the comrades."

Zorn rose. "You will give your word to come quietly?" he suggested.

Fortune understood perfectly that there were men to curb him if he became defiant. He nodded. Together they left the room and presently pushed through another door to a hall of considerable size.

The hall was brightly lighted and it held probably a hundred men. At Zorn's entrance they rose as a mark of respect, but when they caught sight of Fortune a confused shouting began that started a riot.

Fists were shaken at the young captain. Men struggled and leaped by one another's shoulders to see him better.

"That's the man!"

"He attacked our Mary!"

"Hang him! Burn him!"

"Kill, kill, kill!"

"Death for Wolff's slave-drivers!"

The concentrated hatred of their chorus struck Fortune with the surprise of an unexpected blow in the face.

CHAPTER VIII.

FORTUNE GIVES HIS PROMISE.

IT was Zorn who quieted the outburst of hate. He did it by the simple expedient of stepping to the edge of the platform and raising his hands to invoke silence. As

he began to speak the assembled men slipped hastily to their benches and listened with the docility of children.

"Are we men, endowed with reason, or are we beasts?" Zorn reproved them. "We tell ourselves we are gathered here in the cause of justice and human rights—and we act like the Wild Folk! Enough!"

The last murmur had subsided. Every eye was fixed on Zorn with a respectful attention that amounted to veneration.

Fortune began to note individuals in this audience. He saw that every man wore the bracelet of the Folk, yet there was something about each one of them which would have made him remarked among the mass of the people of the Under City. Certainly it was not dress or feature or carriage, for in these respects they were as unprepossessing as the rank and file who slaved for the directorate.

Fortune decided that it was the eyes of these men which distinguished them. Every glance held a quicker intelligence than the common—something of self-respect and mental alertness.

"Mary," Zorn turned to the girl who had entered close behind them. "Unveil the figure," he directed. "As you sincerely mean what you said to me about this man, pray for him to-night!"

Fortune had noticed that in the center of the wall backing the stage there was a large, curtained niche. The girl Mary stepped before this niche and raised her hand to open the draperies. Instantly every man in the room fixed his attention on her.

The curtains swung aside under Mary's hand and there stood revealed in life size, a duplicate of the colossal figure that topped the ruin they were in—the Great Woman of the ancients, its missing arm restored, the face finished as of old so that it reflected a majestic but benevolent purpose. Fortune saw that the Great Woman in this restoration bore aloft a torch and in this torch there glowed a little leaping flame.

Instantly he thought of Wolff, the Great Towerman, exhibiting his golden statuette bearing the sword, and though he could not have told why, he was swept by a thrill of adoration that recognized in the revealed symbol something he knew to be the truth.

Fortune was no student of ruins. He had never troubled his head with speculations about this mutilated figure of the isle, but deep within him an old memory—a memory that was not of his own life nor time—struggled for rebirth so that he breathed more quickly and the blood ran faster in his veins.

Over the whole roomful the revelation acted with the quickness of an electric shock.

Men fixed their gaze on the image and into their eyes sprang fires of hope and the blind worship of an immortal ideal.

Some, more superstitious, sank to their knees. Several stood as a mark of respect, their gaze fixed on the image, heads held high in prideful, yet respectful, allegiance. Still others bowed their heads and their lips moved as if they prayed.

Before the image Mary stood like some high priestess of a strange faith. Her raised face was transfixed in an ecstasy. She held her slim, graceful young body rigid. The creamy-brown of her cheeks—the healthful tan that only keen, out-of-door life can give—flooded with color, and her grayish eyes glowed deep blue.

She spoke, and the music of her deep, clear voice was a hymn of praise.

"Goddess of the Torch, famed of old, thou Lamp to guide our feet in dark ways, giver of just laws and guardian of freedom, to you we pray, Lady of Justice, kindle the light in our hearts. Quiet our passions. Give us knowledge for our guidance. Strengthen our arms to battle for the right, but temper our will to resist the disorders of human folly. Lead our hosts into battle, but counsel us that we may not do those things which would shame thy name. Restore that freedom that is our ancient birth-right and make us strong to preserve it and to keep thy torch burning clear. In the name of humanity we ask this!"

She stopped, and a sigh rose from the attentive audience. Zorn, who stood close to Fortune, mused in a voice scarcely audible: "It always quiets them! Men must have symbols and images to hold them to a purpose—like children playing games!"

Then Mary spoke again. She continued to address the Great Woman's image:

"There is one here guilty of an act of oppression," she prayed. "He is no evil-doer, only a product of his time, misled by ignorance. Give us vision to see the truth and strength to deal justly by him."

Fortune felt his cheeks burn. He was bitterly humiliated that a mere girl of the Folk should speak in his defense, yet more than humiliation, he felt a confused sense of shame. With sudden surprise he recognized his own wrongdoing. He did not know where to look or how to bear himself.

"Comrades," Zorn stepped forward again. "This man here, our prisoner, is Fortune, overcaptain in the army of the Tower People—"

A groan of derision interrupted him.

"He is a soldier—a brave soldier, and a skilled one, nevertheless," Zorn continued firmly. "There is no need to let our prejudice blind us to that! He also is a young man, hasty, ignorant of any rights save those of his class and his superiors—and he is guilty of attempting to seize our own Mary."

Again the muttering interrupted him.

"I have heard all the story," Zorn resumed, after a moment. "I know something of what this young captain has done on the north wall. He is that same Fortune who held back the Wild Fork with but half a company at his back."

Now men craned their necks eagerly to stare at the hero of the wall. Old habit returned and Fortune stared back haughtily, disdainful of these humble men.

"It is easy to say, 'kill this man,'" counselled Zorn. "It is simple enough to do it, but what does it profit us? I ask you to consider our own need. We must have such a man as this, a soldier who can make soldiers of us, if we are to carry out our plan. 'Chance sends us the very man we need. Shall we use him?'"

"Will he serve us?" shouted a frowzy-headed fellow, whose face was smudged with soot, evidently from the armorers' cantonment.

"Never!" said Fortune with bitter emphasis, staring proudly down on them.

The hubbub renewed itself. Zorn turned a flashing eye on the defiant soldier.

"Cheap words, young captain!" he de-

clared with a scorn that made Fortune wince. "Cheap words! But you are young—and ignorant." To the assembly he went on: "Mary herself disclaims all wish for vengeance against this soldier. She will sacrifice personal feeling to the good of the cause. I ask that you ignore his youthful defiance, that you reason like men—and give me time, time to open his eyes—"

"Yes, but he defies us!" shouted the armorer.

"He'll betray us!" yelled another in the blue smock of a road-mender.

"Comrades," began a third, a wild-eyed, long-haired fellow whose skin was dirty yellow from close living, and whose clothes were covered with the lint and yarn of the looms, "comrades, what good can come of coddling one of Wolff's slave-drivers, one of these oppressors of the weak? Kill him—"

Mary herself interrupted here. Men glanced into her bright eyes and looked aside guiltily, but they listened, and it was evident the girl could turn them any way she chose.

"I ask you for this soldier's life," she began eagerly. "There has been one murder because of him already—his man is dead by Shard's hand. In time to come his kind must pay in bloodshed for the wrongs they have done. The city will drip with their blood, and the innocent will die with the guilty. In the name of humanity let no life be taken that we can spare!

"By all right this man's fate is in my hands. I choose to spare him, less from pity—though I hope I can pity even such a soldier of the Tower People—but more because I see in him the tool we can use in our work. Let him live among us thirty days. Let him have every opportunity to learn what it is we are doing. If then he cannot see the justice of our cause, if he cannot join us, I give him back to you. Do you consent?"

"Aye! Let him live!" The consent was general.

Fortune had stared in dumb amazement at this girl who pleaded for his life. In every word he read her contempt for him, but instead of resenting it, he was overwhelmed by shame. Still his confused mind

found room for a thrilling admiration, not for her physical beauty and charm alone, but for her quick intelligence and nobility. He was mentally and spiritually in a state of chaos, and there was nothing in the world he knew to serve as his compass.

Zorn addressed him: "Captain, do you give me your word as a soldier to accept this decision, to live among us here for thirty days, to study our purpose with an open mind, and then declare whether you are for or against us?"

He accepted this strange reprieve mechanically, too vastly amazed to feel relief even at an escape from certain death.

"You will have the freedom of the island," Zorn instructed him. "I will give you every facility to learn the plans and purpose of the Comrades of the Torch. I ask you to judge with an open mind. And while you are among us, studying on an equality, bear in mind your position. To try to escape, to attempt any treachery, means your death."

The meeting turned its attention to other business. In a few moments Fortune was as forgotten as if he had never been. He sat toward the rear of the platform, alone, absorbed for a time in his own bewilderment.

When gradually he became aware of other events and began to listen he heard news fully as astonishing as anything that had happened to him.

It was a remark of the sooty-faced armorer, a man they called Gross, that recalled his attention.

"The stocking of our secret arsenal in the old, blind tunnels has made progress," this man was declaring. "The task is a difficult one when each man must do what he can at such times as the police-guard are not near, but every man of us is inspired to do his best. Of shields and breast-plates we have enough already for a thousand men. In swords we are still lacking, because the forging of a sword is work for a skilled man, and we who can do that are fewer. But there I saw bows for two thousand and a great store of arrows. Spear-points, too, we have in plenty, and our brothers of the wood-shops will bring in the shafts. Comrades, we men of the forges

are not shirking! May the gods speed the day when our work will see its reward."

Applause greeted this report. Other men in turn brought messages, and Fortune began to realize with a tingle of excitement that the veiled distrust of the Folk he had heard among the High-born was not without foundation. Rebellion was brewing!

And it became clear to him that this was no ordinary outburst of passion, not one of the sudden, sporadic uprisings which had been more or less common in his time. This was more than rebellion—they were plotting revolution.

And not only were these men plotting—they were doing. A superior intelligence was guiding them, and it needed no second thought to guess that that intelligence was this black-robed man, Zorn.

And another thing impressed him. These men who talked—plainly they were agents sent out among the Folk to spread the propaganda of revolution—spoke with a clear understanding and reflected a stern purpose. They were far above the Folk in their grasp of the situation. They recognized the weaknesses of their schemes, deplored the cross-purposes of selfish interests, discussed the necessity of a unified plan.

In short, they were educated men—men fully as capable of planning and carrying out a plan as the soldiers of the Tower Rule, and far more capable than they in one thing, a stern inflexibility of purpose.

The thing was a miracle!

Where had men of the Folk got this knowledge? How? Again Fortune saw behind them the master hand of Zorn. For the black-robed genius whose power extended in secret throughout the Under City he conceived an admiration that amounted to awe.

Why, if one dared suppose for an instant that this mad plan could succeed, Zorn threatened the power of the Directorate itself. Given the chance, he might become the Great Towerman—a man more powerful than Wolff!

What Fortune could not comprehend was the magic Zorn had used to bind men to him. He heard frequent repetition of such phrases as: "That freedom which was the

birthright of the ancient"; and "the right of every man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but to his ears these were as unintelligible as an alien tongue.

So he sat puzzled, only half comprehending, viewing a scene without parallel in the history of our civilization—the first steps toward the reestablishment of liberty in America.

Later he would learn how the strange man Zorn and the girl known as Mary of the Isle, sheltered by the ruins of that statue known to the ancients as the Goddess of Liberty, had rekindled the almost dying flame of freedom. He would learn how, from the miserable refugees who escaped the slavery of the Tower People this heroic pair formed the nucleus of the movement which set men free and established our government of to-day much as it was organized before that century of blackness in which he lived. There would come a day when Fortune could look back upon this bewildering evening and thrill to the drama of history; boast that he had seen with his own eyes.

But to-night he saw only dirty faces and wild glances; heard only alarming threats against the established order that, to him, was right and truth.

He failed to grasp, beneath surface incongruities, the virile impulse which bound these men to a sacred cause, and made heroes, against their own will, of Folk of the commonest clay.

That every man has a right to own and sell the products of his labor; to own land and a home if he can earn it; to pay no tax except his just share of the common expense, and to share in all common knowledge is a commonplace of to-day. To Fortune it was wild nonsense.

The meeting concluded when the Comrades had again pledged their loyalty to the Lady of the Torch. They dispersed hastily, and Fortune gathered from their talk that they came by small boats to the island, meeting there often. He knew that policing of the Under City was slack, and it was easily possible for desperate men to leave their assigned cantonments by dark.

With Zorn at his side, Fortune walked from the hall, his head in a whirl.

Zorn spoke abruptly: "The man who came with you," he said, "was he servant or friend?"

"Both," Fortune answered. "Such a servant as no man could wish better and such a friend as few men ever owned."

"His body will be buried to-night. It waits, in fact, only because I guessed something of the sort. Will you see it?"

Fortune nodded. Zorn conducted him to a small, cold cell where the body of Ham had been laid on a bench, decently wrapped in his cloak and composed for his last sleep.

There Zorn left the young captain. For a long time Fortune remained, staring dumbly into the white face of the man who had long been his companion; who had so often gone without food or sleep to serve his wish; who had so often risked his life to shield his master.

In a few short hours the young man's world had gone quite mad. He had seen and heard things which made him dumb with astonishment; he had passed through adventures that seemed to numb all emotion.

But this silent clay before him, this homely, familiar face recalled the past. It was not to his discredit that he found his eyes wet with unexpected tears.

His hand touched the cold hand of his servant and friend. "Ham," he choked, "Ham—my friend—forgive me!"

CHAPTER IX.

KINST, THE GOLDSMITH.

A FEW days more, and Fortune must give his answer to the Comrades of the Torch. If he chose to accept their beliefs there was before him the dubious prospect of training soldiers for a crazy cause—a cause he considered hopeless.

If he refused that offer they would kill him.

A third alternative was escape from the Isle of the Great Woman. More and more that thought occupied his attention.

As the weeks passed Fortune had lost his first hope that Alda or Wenn would come to his rescue. It was but a faint hope that they could find him, for to nobody had

the young man confided his plans when he sailed from the Manhattan shore.

Wenn did seek for his captain, as thoroughly as he knew how, and the High-born, Wolff's daughter, urged him to new efforts. But neither of them could solve the mystery of Fortune's disappearance.

So with the passing weeks the prisoner had maintained an appearance of interest in the plans of Zorn, the recluse, while secretly his thoughts were busy with two absorbing problems: How to escape, and how to take the girl, Mary, with him.

Of Mary he had seen much. Zorn had given to her the task of instructing Fortune in the ideals of the queer brotherhood. Even the eloquence of this strange young woman, known to the Comrades as the Torch-child, left his mind unmoved. But her daily companionship had played havoc with his affections.

From Zorn, Fortune had learned what he early suspected—that this girl was no child of the Folk. Like Zorn himself, who had quit Manhattan when his awakened conscience would no longer let him enjoy the empty honor of being Director of Knowledge, Mary was a refugee.

Her father had been of the Tower People. He had died and left a baby daughter with none to care for her. Zorn had taken this ward, and it was Zorn who taught her all the hidden wisdom found in ancient books as well as how to ride and fence and shoot a bow.

The very thought of Mary was a delicious torture to Fortune. Above anything on earth he coveted her. A hundred times as he sat beside her or walked with her he was ready to forswear all ambition, to forget allegiance pledged to Wolff and the Tower Rule, to throw away every claim to normal life if by that he could win her.

And a hundred times more he had been stopped by the knowledge that he could not take up her cause with sincerity—the wrongs of the Folk left him unmoved.

No higher tribute to Mary can be recorded than the spirit of honesty she created in the conscienceless young captain of the Tower People, an honesty strong enough to hold him back from the very thing he most desired.

If he would escape, but a few days remained in which to make a plan. A few days, and he must give his final answer to these Comrades of the Torch.

If it were not for Mary he easily could have lied, and played the traitor at the earliest convenience. She made that rôle impossible.

Of the permanent members of this revolutionary group less than a score lived on the Isle of the Great Woman, keeping by day under cover of its grove, so that few of the Tower People of Manhattan guessed the place was inhabited. Among them Fortune had a wide freedom, yet he knew that he was constantly watched.

The gigantic Shard was often near him, and, when Shard was not, the crooked-backed Tringe appeared in the rôle of shadow.

The little humpback spent his days flying big kites, and Fortune was at first inclined to think him a half-wit, but he noticed that during their infrequent conversations it was Tringe who won the honors easily. Months later, when he understood the kites, he wondered at his own blindness.

Shard proved merely a stupid and naturally good-natured fellow. But what he lacked in knowledge and cunning wit his companion and closest friend, the humpback, made up with overflowing measure so that one or the other of these watchmen seemed always to anticipate Fortune's intentions and be present to discourage him.

There remained to him one last hope—the possibility of finding some man he could bribe to carry a message to Alda. He looked for such a one among the Comrades who gathered at the meetings which occurred twice a week.

Sometimes these agents from the Under City who came to report progress of the revolutionary propaganda brought with them strange converts to the cause.

These were usually miserable beings, often mutilated by some official cruelty of their masters, or half starved and fevered with the privations of their hiding-places or the prisons in the Drains where they had been kept.

One night Fortune recognized a familiar face. Memory placed the man as the victim of Ransome's justice that morning he had sat in court in the gold workers' cantonment. The man was Kinst, the maker of Wolff's golden images—Kinst, who loved the woman Anna and who had seen Anna torn from him.

Directly the business of the meeting was finished Fortune made an opportunity and drew Kinst aside. He saw a way to make this man serve his purpose.

"Tell me, Kinst," he smiled coolly at the goldsmith, "what of your woman Anna—what lucky man got her?"

Kinst stared as if he had seen a ghost. He began to tremble. "Who are you?" he whispered.

"You do not know me, then?"

Fortune had abandoned his uniform and armor at Zorn's suggestion, and wore the plain, coarse garb of the Comrades.

"You are not of my cantonment," Kinst muttered. "No, you are no gold worker, and yet I have seen you!" He seized Fortune by either arm, and his hands were shaking.

"Have you seen *her*?" he whispered eagerly. "Does she live? Is she—is she—what have they done with her? Whoever you are, in the name of mercy tell me!"

His pleading voice quavered in a high, cracked note of utter misery that brought a shiver to the man who played with him.

"Hush, not so loud!" Fortune cautioned irritably. "Look at me, Kinst, look well, and I'll tell you of the morning when Ransome sat in judgment and took your woman from you." He began to describe Ransome's justice.

Suddenly Kinst shrank back against the wall, eyes dilated, his lip lifted in a snarl of bestial rage.

"I know you now," he muttered savagely. "I know you! You are that young captain—Fortune! Yes, I know you, and by the Torch you shall pay!"

With a fury that staggered Fortune the little goldsmith launched himself against him, hands outstretched to clasp his throat. In the suddenness of his attack he surprised the soldier, and his long nails sank

deep in the flesh of Fortune's neck before the stronger man had time to strike.

Fortune's heavy fist caught Kinst in the face, once, twice, blows that were enough to kill a man. The goldsmith released his death grip and fell back, panting and snapping. He foamed at the mouth like some mad dog.

"Stand there and listen!" Fortune ordered, his heavy hand pinning Kinst against the stone wall. "You rat, if I did right I'd kill you for that. You dare! And I was trying to aid you—"

"You!"

"And why not? Do you want your woman back—do you want Anna?"

A glint of low cunning came into Kinst's stare. "If the high-born has Anna—" he began.

Fortune laughed scornfully. "Not I," he declared with a fervor that Kinst recognized as truth. "But, if you are willing to do me a service, Kinst, I can serve you in turn. For a certain favor I am willing to pay high—to pay you with the woman you lost. You like that idea, eh?"

"Where is she?" Kinst muttered.

"Safe enough, never fear. No harm has come to her—and she loves you still."

Fortune made this prediction with cheerful certainty. He knew the woman had been imprisoned, and for the rest, he was certain her pallid, plain face with its red-eyed misery of grief would never catch the fancy of an officer.

"What is it you want with me?" asked the goldsmith sullenly.

"To carry a message, a very secret message, to some one at Wolff's Tower."

"What some one?"

"If I tell you, you promise to keep my secret? Remember, I can repay you—"

Kinst frowned suspiciously at the bargainer. "What will come of it?" he demanded.

"That is my own affair—not yours."

"Ah!" Kinst's suspicions appeared to have reached proof. "I know," he nodded sagely, "I know! You are plotting treachery—treachery against the Comrades. What are you doing here, you a soldier of Wolff's guard, dressed in that cloth? How does it come you pass among the Comrades

and listen to our plans? Now I know! You are a spy—a sneaking, lying spy. I'll denounce you—now."

Fortune merely laughed, and his laugh served the purpose of disarming Kinst.

"By all means, go ahead," he invited. "Tell them what you please—they know all about me already."

"Then—then—" Kinst stammered uncertainly. "I am no traitor to my kind," he protested nervously. "You cannot buy me—no, not even with—with Anna. In pity's name, tell me again she is safe. Tell me!"

Kinst raised his trembling hands in supplication.

"Safe for a few days at least," said Fortune coldly. "I'll not promise she'll be safe long—unless you do my errand."

"And how do I know you'll keep your promise—why should I credit you?"

"You have my word; I do not break my word to any man."

"No." Kinst shook his head stubbornly. "It's some sort of treachery. I'll not do it."

"Very well, you'll never see the woman again. When I return to Manhattan I'll give her to my soldiers." Fortune turned away.

"Wait, wait—" Kinst started to follow him eagerly.

Fortune secretly breathed a huge sigh of relief. He had found the way!

In his note to Alda, he told her as much as he thought necessary to appeal to her self-interest in bringing about his rescue and no more. Since he had decided definitely against the Comrades and the revolution, he was determined to play his own game for all that was in it.

He realized that if he could escape from the island he possessed a secret that might be valuable. Alda already had hinted that she planned some stroke against the Comptroller's power, a plan, Fortune guessed, designed to make her secure in her father's place.

While the Directorate, which consisted of the various administrators of government, followed the formality of electing its Great Towerman, he knew it was influenced by whoever held a balance of power. Freder-

ick was the logical successor to Wolff if he could not be checkmated. On second thought Fortune wondered why he had not cast his lot with the mighty Comptroller who had so cleverly used his position as administrator of the community wealth to rise higher than any man in government.

But his distrust of Frederick was instinctive. Frederick was a man who played a solitary game, but Alda was a woman, and with all her cleverness she must depend upon men to carry out many of her plans.

It was his intention to make the best possible bargain with Alda and sell her the information about the brewing revolution. She would know best what to do with the secret.

The optimistic young man saw himself rising to a position of enviable power—perhaps the command of the army of the Tower People; perhaps something even more glittering. To be quite frank, he had never forgotten the old children's song about "Fortune the White." His ambition was boundless, and he was sure of himself with the sureness of youth. Might he not some day "rule in might," as the old rhyme predicted?

Certainly he could hope for a richer reward from Alda than from anything that depended on the caprice of the Folk.

As Alda's consort in government he could see himself a successor to Wolff! The dream was a rosy one, and he thought nothing at all of the misery that would pay for his rise to power.

Only, there was no word from Kinst!

A thousand times a day in those dragging three days of awful waiting he decided bitterly that the little gold-worker had betrayed him. As often he renewed his hope in his messenger, sure that Kinst's desire to regain Anna would keep him discreet.

The afternoon of the third day found him desperate. He had risked everything on a single turn of the dice, and the dice delayed their throw until the last second of the last minute—or else already had turned against him.

It was the first day of the month of June, a day that blessed the scarred old earth with the warmth of a lover's kiss,

Fortune walked alone on the beach, conscious always that he was watched from a distance, but glad to keep away from Zorn or any who might question him.

At a distance he saw the crooked-backed man Tringe, playing with his kites, and near him the inseparable Shard. He recognized, too, with a sudden start, Mary's plain, gray robe. Conquering his impulse to be near her, he lay on the sand and watched the sky and sea, turning a longing glance toward the ruined walls of old New York not so far away, but still beyond his reach.

To forget Mary he busied his mind with speculations about Alda's plans. Then he became acutely conscious that Mary was walking toward him.

Always this girl walked bareheaded, swinging easily in strides as long as a boy's and graceful as any beautiful wild animal. The warm sun discovered burnished streaks in her soft, fine brown hair. It ripened her cheeks to a peach bloom. Her shoes of soft leather made no sound in the sand so that she appeared to glide free of the earth.

To Fortune it seemed she moved like splendid music, and all the commonplace and sordid plans he had been making fled at her approach.

When Mary was near he rose to greet her.

"Sit down beside me," Fortune invited. "Help me to bask away these last few hours of freedom. This day is enough to make a contented philosopher even of a condemned man."

Mary's eyes widened with grave concern. "You have decided, then?"

"Not finally," Fortune turned hot and embarrassed at the evasion. It was hard to lie to Mary.

"Zorn has asked for you. He is curious what answer you will give the Comrades."

"Are you curious, Mary? Does it trouble you?"

"I have done all that I can to win you to the cause," Mary answered simply. "If I could do more, I would—"

"What, to save my life? Tell me, would you do it to save me from execution?"

Mary looked vaguely troubled. When she answered it was with characteristic honesty. "No, I do not think so—not for that,

but we do need a man of your trade and ability—we need you bitterly. Why won't you—no, I promised myself I'd say no more about that!"

"Then if I die to-night you will not be sorry—not even for a minute," exclaimed the young soldier reproachfully. "You will not regret—you will not miss me?"

"Regret? Certainly I will regret."

Mary's grayish-blue eyes met his gaze with perfect frankness. "I will miss you more than I can tell, because of our need for you and your work—"

"My work! Will you never forget my work, my trade! Mary, will you never look at me as a man—a man who loves you? For a few minutes will you forget your schemes and your dirty-faced rabble and answer me truly? A month we've walked together and talked together and laughed together. Are you not human? Will you never, for a moment, think sadly of the man who loved you—after he is gone?"

Mary's hands were clasped about one drawn-up knee. Her face was turned away and she seemed to look steadily at the distant city. Fortune studied the profile of cheek eager to guess if it had flushed or if it gave any sign of response to his supplication.

He found time to marvel at the even, creamy brown of her slender neck and slim shoulder where the breeze stirred her robe; to long to touch a feathery wisp of hair that escaped from the knotted mass resting in the hollow at the base of her head.

Mary spoke, her face still averted: "Now, you are thinking only of yourself—I will not tell you."

Despite the words she chose, Fortune was encouraged to plead. "Do you remember how we first met here on this beach? It was almost two years ago, and it seems a lifetime! Do you think I ever forgot that day for one instant?"

"I was only out of the cadets' school, on a pleasure voyage, exploring this great bay in my little boat. And I landed here and found you. You were not so cold then!"

"I startled you, but we became friends. We laughed together—we got on famously. You remember! Then you warned me to

go before I was seen with you—told me never to come back.”

“Why did you come back?” Mary spoke with face averted.

“As if you didn’t know why! Because I never could put you out of my mind one instant. Because I loved you and was bound to have you—oh, I know now I did wrong! Don’t blame me, I knew no better then. I am bitterly ashamed—”

“I do not blame you.” Still Mary did not turn her face toward him.

“But now, when I realize who you are, what you are—Do you understand that I would take you as my wife? Do you know I would give you a name men respect; that I’ll bring you the whole world to play with, Mary?”

“Are you heartless? Are you made of stone—I say I love you. If you’ll come away with me from this mad place—Mary, if you could pity me! If—”

Now Mary looked at him. Her eyes were so kind, her regard so gentle that Fortune impulsively drew closer. She checked him with a little gesture almost unconscious.

“You deserve an honest answer,” she said in a tone so low Fortune could scarcely hear. “I realize that you are at least sincere. And, my friend, oh, my dear—I—I’m sorry!”

“Sorry!”

“I am not stone, Fortune. I do feel—”

“You do, you say you—”

“No, I do not love you. I can’t love you—or any man. Listen to me! I have my work to do—yes, it is my work and it means more than my life to me—more than happiness. I could not be happy with you. Until that work is done, until that cause is served to which I have given myself ever since I was old enough to know right from wrong, I will love no man. I will feel for no man nor even think of any man except to turn him to the service of Our Lady of the Torch. Fortune, I want you to understand me—you deserve that much. I would not have you die, I would not have you lost to me forever thinking hardly of me.”

Mary rose, and Fortune rose and stood close to her. She regarded him with a grave kindness. “We must say good-by,” she

whispered sadly. “I think it will be forever. But I am glad that you spoke again—I am proud you think of me as you do. Just as I am glad—and proud—to serve—to serve—”

“Mary! Mary—”

“Good-by.” Impulsively her hand reached out and the fingers rested a second, very lightly, on his cheek. She turned and walked away swiftly. The dignity of her good-by denied him all thought of following—of argument.

Toward evening, as he lounged at the stone parapet that formed the base of the ruined statue, staring into the lazy blue distance without coherent thought, Fortune saw that Zorn stood beside him.

The black-robed recluse observed him sternly.

“The time has ended, captain,” said Zorn. “You will give us your answer to-night.”

“Yes,” Fortune nodded. If only he knew of Kinst’s answer for him—or if Kinst had an answer!

“Well,” Zorn insisted, “you have decided?”

“I have decided.”

Zorn frowned. “You evade me,” he complained. “I do not think you are with us.”

Now Fortune saw that he must have every possible advantage to carry out his plan—if the opportunity of that plan was offered. He would not give his word—even to Zorn. But an indirect lie—after all, Zorn was not Mary, he could regard Zorn as an enemy—a man who stood in his way. “I think, then,” he smiled, “that my answer will greatly surprise you. Very greatly.”

“Good!” Zorn exclaimed with a sigh of relief. “Then you are with us?”

“I would prefer to explain myself to all the Comrades—”

“Certainly, certainly! Captain, I congratulate you—and the cause, too. I appreciate what we have gained.”

“Thank you,” Fortune smiled.

“And I was worried because I thought you’d have to die.” Zorn laughed. “So Mary has won you? The girl is wonderful!”

"She is marvelous," the soldier agreed with sincere enthusiasm.

The meeting of the Comrades was assembling. Fortune mingled among the crowd that took the benches, searching eagerly for Kinst. At last he saw the goldsmith and grasped him by the arm. "Well?" he questioned sharply.

"Sir," Kinst stammered, "I have an answer, I—"

"What is it, quick?"

"You will not forget your promise? You'll not fail me? Anna, my woman—"

"I'll get you back your woman; I promise."

"When, when?"

"Three days from to-night I'll bring her to your cantonment—"

"No, no! I am going—I have quit that place forever. I am in the secret arsenal of the Comrades. I cannot go back there—"

"Then, you know the little court behind Wolff's Tower. There is a door in the wall—"

"Yes!"

"Be there. Now the answer. Hurry!"

"She bade me say the boat and soldiers will be sent—to-night," whispered Kinst fearfully. "And here, she returns your token, the ring."

The goldsmith pressed into Fortune's hand the gold ring bearing the device of a coiled serpent which he had sent with his message by way of assuring the High-born.

A wild joy surged over him. He lived again. The future held a rosy promise of adventure and success. As for the Folk and their troubles; as for such things as had troubled his conscience when he looked on them through Mary's eyes—he was quit of them all!

He planned swiftly.

The comrades of the Torch had important business to discuss. Plans were complete for assembling a great, secret meeting of all the Folk of the Under City of Manhattan.

"The place is fixed," Zorn announced. "We have chosen a spot in the ruined tunnels on the west side of the island, where there is a great hall left beneath the walls of that huge stone building that once the

ancients used for the swift wagons that carried them all about the world.

"Agents from the various cantonments will be prepared to conduct their delegations into the old tunnels at midnight of Sunday, the third day of next month. On the day of rest the vigilance of the guard is much relaxed and there will be less difficulty in assembling. In the early hours of Monday morning we will gather the greatest meeting of the Folk since the days of the Great Catastrophe, and I will be present to explain our plans.

"The day is particularly significant. It will be the fourth of the month of July—a day that in a happier time of the world's history was the sacred anniversary of the birth of freedom on this continent. May we again sanctify it in the cause of human rights!"

A tremendous cheer greeted Zorn's announcement. The delegates shouted and sang in their enthusiasm. The hall fairly trembled with the uproar and the excitement grew intense.

Finally a man—it was the long-haired weaver who had first shouted for Fortune's death—made himself heard above the turmoil.

"Comrades!" he yelled. "Comrades! Where is the man Fortune, Wolff's captain? What of him? It is time he answered us. Bring him out. To-night he must join or die!"

Gradually the sense of his harangue was caught up by others. There began a furious clamor for Fortune.

Then they discovered that Fortune was gone. He had disappeared and no man knew when!

When Zorn had finally quieted the insane rage to some semblance of order, men were sent to solve the mystery. After some time they reported.

Outside the door, at the rear of the hall of meeting, a guard was found, dead by strangulation.

On the north beach they discovered the bodies of two of the beach patrol. One still lived. He gasped his testimony of a strange boat that had been seen off the isle; of sudden attack by an armed man identified as Fortune, and the bloody fight

that ended when men came ashore from the strange boat and aided Fortune's escape.

There was no more to tell.

CHAPTER X.

TWO INTERVIEWS.

IN the recessed doorway of the little court behind Wolff's Tower a man waited in the dark.

He fidgeted impatiently, frequently wringing his hands as he paced the niche; often darting out to look in every direction and as hastily retreating again to his shelter. He moaned in a half articulate monotone that betrayed extreme agitation. He had been waiting there two hours.

The man was Kinst, the little gold-worker, Fortune's messenger. He had come for the reward Fortune had promised.

Kinst was fearful of being seen by anybody. A chance encounter with one of the Comrades of the Torch would involve explanations which he dared not make; his discovery by one of Wolff's guard would undoubtedly lead to his arrest as a fugitive from the gold-workers' cantonment. He was in a terrible situation with no hope except the promise of a man he knew only as one of Wolff's captains.

"Oh, oh, oh!" he muttered ceaselessly. "He will betray me, I know it! He lied to me! What a fool I've been to trust him. Now I'll be sent to the Drains. Oh, oh, I've betrayed the Comrades—I've lost everything!"

The door against which he leaned with miserable resignation suddenly was pulled inward. Kinst bounded back with a cry of terror.

"Be still—and come in here, quick!"

With a staggering revulsion of feeling the goldsmith recognized the voice as Fortune's. Quick as a rat he scurried into the black court beyond and helped Fortune to shut the big door.

Then Kinst saw another dim shape in the blackness, a muffled, woman's shape that advanced toward him uncertainly and made little moans of joy.

"Anna!" he cried. "It is? It is you, then? Ah, Anna—Anna!" The two figures

merged to one. Fortune was left to witness their happiness.

The young captain laughed to himself with a good-natured scorn not unmingled with surprise. This was a funny pair, sure enough!

It was beyond his power to explain the devotion of Kinst to this unprepossessing rag of a woman; or hers to the goldsmith. But anybody could see they loved one another. He reflected on the strangeness of the Folk, who lived like beasts of labor—yes, even looked like beasts—yet found a place somewhere for emotions as human as his own.

Kinst tore himself away from his woman and seized Fortune's hand. He dropped to his knees in the dust and babbled some incoherent nonsense, evidently meant as a protestation of gratitude.

"Come, come, get up," said Fortune. "Get up from that dirt. I said I'd bring you the woman unharmed, and I did—that was our bargain. Don't add all this blubbering."

"I swear it to you, I swear it," Kinst kept insisting. "If ever the high-born needs a friend, I will be his friend. If ever he seeks shelter, or help—"

"You're talking nonsense. What help or shelter have you to offer? Be still—"

"Ah, but you cannot tell, you never know! Some day perhaps it will be my turn to repay. Remember, Kinst is your friend—"

"Very good, I'll remember—" Fortune hesitated. An idea had occurred to him. After all, he might use this Kinst again, if Kinst should prove the proper spirit. Why not; the man was protesting an undying devotion!

"Then listen, since you are grateful," he began. "You are of the Comrades now?"

"Yes, high-born," Kinst whispered.

"You go among them, know their plans, attend the secret meetings?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then if you wish a still greater reward, if you care for presents of gold and want to remain my friend, bring to me the news of the revolution. Tell me all they do. I'll reward you generously—What is it?"

Kinst had drawn back strangely.

"No!" he burst out. "No, not for anything you could give me. Not even to save my life, or my woman! I am no spy."

"Yet you just said you would do anything!"

"Not that. You think I have no honor because I am of the Folk? You think I am a traitor, eh? Ah, yes, you think any man of the Folk would sell himself—tell me, would you betray your friends?"

"You mangy whelp!" Fortune raised his fist to strike. "You presume to ask that! You—oh, yes, I forgot, you think all men are born equals. Well, you are answered."

"Then," cried Kinst, striking himself a blow on the chest, "I am a man, too! Anything but that, yes! I am no traitor."

"Very well." Fortune shrugged indifferently. "I merely offered you a chance to do better. Let it go. But tell me, Kinst, what do you expect from this crazy revolution? Power? Money? A tower to live in? You're not smart enough—they'll trample you in the crush. Suppose it did succeed—what then?"

"Power? No. Money? No. A tower, no, no!" Kinst spoke with a curious, proud confidence. "But, great sir, when my son is born! He will find a better world. He'll learn the hidden knowledge of the ancients, he'll have his chance with the best of them! Is that nothing to hope for?"

"Oh, hope for it, by all means. You'll never get it. Now be off with you, you and your woman—ah, what's this?"

The door in the wall vibrated to a heavy knocking. "Open in the name of Wolff's guard!" a voice shouted. "Come, quick about it! We saw you go in there, and you're surrounded. Come out!"

"Oh-h-h!" gasped Kinst. "Betrayed! You've tricked me—"

"Shut up, you fool." Fortune seized the gold-worker by the arm and shook him harshly. "If I'd betrayed you d'you think I'd have gone about it this way, without my soldiers? Be still. Here's a fine mess. I can't be found with you—that won't do! Kinst, run, look from the other wall, straight back there, where there's a little gate. If no one is watching it slip out quick. You can dodge till you escape them."

Kinst sped away with Anna. The knocking continued.

"Hurry!" warned the voice. "We're going to break in, and it will be the worse for you."

The court was walled in on two sides by the ruinous shells of old buildings, crumbling heaps, but with walls too high for a man to climb them in the dark. The other two sides were fenced by masonry, twice as high as a man's head.

He saw that the thing for him to do was to get rid of Kinst and the woman. Fortune hurried to the rear door.

There Kinst and Anna huddled, two figures of stupid dismay. "Ssst!" the gold-worker breathed. "Soldiers—against the door, outside!"

Fortune heard a mutter of voices. Pressing his ear against the panel, he listened.

"What'd they turn us out for?" one grumbled.

"Runaway from the Under City," said another.

A third voice added: "Well, let him run! A fine way to use the Tower Guard!"

"I hear it's a gold-worker that Wolff has been petting," the first voice began again. He's been missing, and His Greatness is furious about it. He was seen going in the court to-night—"

"A fine stir for nothing—hark, they're breaking in the other door. Hear that?" Fortune turned to Kinst. "Do as I say and you'll get away safely," he whispered. "Hide here, just beside this door, until after I've taken that guard away. Then slip out; you won't have much time before they break in from the other side! Back, both of you, deeper in the shadow! That's better, crawl under that stuff!"

Fortune swung the door open sharply. "You men!" he cried. "Tower Guard, eh? Good! This way, and hurry—that little rat went over the wall, yes, up at that far corner. Come—"

"Who are you—wait boys. I don't know—" One of the soldiers hesitated.

"Come, see my face, my uniform then, but be quick. I'm Fortune, over-captain, police guard, Cantonment Six, and that man's a fugitive from my district."

"Certainly, captain—all right, lads."

The suspicious man was satisfied. The three stumbled after Fortune among the ruined walls.

And silent as two shadows, Kinst and his woman slipped through the open gate not more than two minutes ahead of the soldiers who burst into the court from the opposite side.

In a few minutes Fortune dismissed his three soldiers and hurried to another appointment. He had been on Manhattan three days and this was his first opportunity, so busy had Wenn kept him, to see Alda. He had much to tell the High-born.

As he hurried to the rear stairway of Wolff's Tower he mused on his recent adventure with some perplexity.

"A fine thing for me to be doing! If the Towerman knew I'd helped Kinst slip away from his soldiers I'd lose my head quick enough. The little rat is a fugitive from the law, yet here I am aiding him. Well, one must keep a promise."

Alda, the High-born, leaned among the cushions and studied her grateful young captain with bright eyes. Her pale face was thoughtful because of what Fortune had told her of the Isle of the Great Woman.

Alda was giving all her shrewdness to a veiled appraisal of this very blond soldier who sat so erect among the feminine luxury of her divan. He had proved himself both grateful and loyal. There was also something in his manner and his acts that suggested no unworthy power. She knew his ambition, and she began to believe him perfectly capable of carrying it out. Altogether he seemed just the man she needed in her planning.

Then she recalled that Fortune had gone to the island for the purpose of finding a woman who had caught his fancy. She smiled kindly, "And what of that girl of the Folk you once spoke about? Did you win her, my friend?"

"No," said the soldier briefly.

"She was another's?"

"No, but before I could take her Ham was killed and I was captured."

"And she would not melt to your pleading?"

"No."

She made a mental note that the topic was distasteful to Fortune. The affair of the girl had better be looked into more thoroughly.

"Well, my dear friend, your news is interesting, but after all, the Folk are always plotting an uprising—I scarcely see how—"

"But never such a revolution as this!"

"You think so?"

"I am certain. I tell you, this is organized, thoroughly. Let them go on a month or two longer and—why, I won't answer for any of us. They're not fooling!"

"No, evidently. I am convinced the news is valuable. But just how to use it—"

"High-born, may I suggest—"

"Why, surely, my dear friend! And must you be so formal? Come, you know my name, Fortune! Are we not friends now?"

"I—I don't dare," Fortune stammered uneasily.

"Ah yes, you dare! Don't I know to my alarm already how far you dare! When you take my hand you frighten me, yet my name—"

"Alda, dear Alda—"

"Ah, that's better. Now, before you go on, let me remind you again. You know my desire? I will rule in Wolff's place when the time comes, or there will no longer be any rule in Manhattan."

Alda's eyes flashed, and she drew herself up proudly. "None of them shall deny me!" she exclaimed. "But when I do rule, Fortune, still I am only a woman—I will need a man's help and advice. And that man, who do you think that man will be?"

"I dare not hope—"

"That man will be the man who helps best to put me in my father's place. That man might well be—you!"

"Now you give me courage for anything!" Fortune exclaimed. He rose and paced nervously. "This is my suggestion. You know first of all, about this revolution. It can be ended now, and ended quickly by taking the leaders by surprise—"

"You would attack the isle and wipe out this nest of vermin?" Alda mused.

"No, not that. To attack the isle would not be difficult. Soldiers could be sent

over in boats, but if they took every soul on the place there would only be a score, and of them only Zorn would be of consequence—”

“And the girl—that one who took your fancy?” Alda suggested.

Fortune looked secretly uneasy.

“But suppose you did take them,” he hurried on. “There is no satisfactory proof of their intention—”

“Proof enough to have them all killed.”

“Yes, but not to convince the Tower People and the Directorate as they must be convinced, of your ability to rule! Give the Directorate a demonstration of your foresight. See, the Comrades must finally appeal to the Folk for support. That will mean a meeting somewhere here on Manhattan. When that is held they will all be together. Take officers of the Directorate to the place with you. Let them see and hear for themselves. Then, when you strike, they will understand and applaud you.”

“My friend,” Alda smiled shrewdly. “You already know that such a meeting is to be held soon.”

“I—I—yes, I do.”

“You did not tell me that!”

“No, I did not. I—” Fortune hesitated to tell his reason. Frankly, it was due to a certain hesitancy in revealing the detailed plans of Zorn and Mary. True, he had made no promise of secrecy, yet he felt an obligation. To him the obligation appeared absurd enough, but somewhere within him a conscience was developing, and sometimes it disturbed him with alarming pangs.

Now, he realized, was the time to slaughter this conscience once and for all, at least so far as it concerned itself with Zorn and Mary and the Folk. Before his eyes had been dangled a prize beyond his rosiest hope; and the spell of Alda had enmeshed him. “Win!” counseled his mind. “Strike boldly. Take everything; Alda and power for your satisfaction, and Mary for your love. Be bold.”

“But I know their plans,” he completed his sentence. “A great meeting in the ruined tunnels will be held the fourth day

of next month. Zorn will be there—all of them! And the Folk will be there, practically every soul in the Under City. Strike then! Strike quickly, take them by surprise, put this rebellion down, and your power is certain. The Directorate cannot deny you. Frederick will have no hand in this.”

“Yes,” Alda nodded, “you are right. I will tell Wolff—oh, of course, he must be told! He has the power now. It must be done in his name. But, as you say, the credit will be ours. It can be managed in such a way that Frederick will know nothing until he hears we have won. The Directorate will not dare deny us then, when we have proved our power to rule!”

“Shall you tell Wolff?”

“No, we two. We’re comrades now, we’ll act together. You are sure of your information?”

“Absolutely.”

“Then we’ll lose no time about it. To-night—”

“To-night!” Fortune could not have explained why he shrank from the final act. Probably that troublesome conscience was not yet thoroughly drugged—and yet the affairs of the Folk were no affairs of his.

They went to Wolff. Fortune retold his story of the revolution and Alda made her argument. Pale morning was revealing the ruined walls of ancient New York when Fortune left Wolff’s Tower.

Although he had reached almost in one stride the goal he had scarcely dared dream he would ever attain, he felt no elation. He was very tired. Toward the Great Towerman, who had revealed in this crisis of government so much of the indecision that was fatal to his success, Fortune felt only peevish contempt. For Alda, who had twisted her father skilfully to her own purpose he had a certain respect based on fear.

In that gray morning all of Alda’s charm had vanished from memory. He saw only an ambitious and resourceful woman whose promises he must accept at face value; who must be watched always lest she bargain better than he did.

And of himself, Fortune had, somehow, a poor opinion, indeed.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

Seven-League Lizzie



by J. E. Grinstead

I.

MUNRO BIBBS was twenty years old, of medium height and build, and a normal youth—up to his neck. From there on north he was so abnormally abnormal that many persons questioned his sanity. One old ranchman who hired Munro, and tried to teach him the art of manual labor, said: "He ain't a idgit. He just ain't got no sense a tall. Why, fellers, that boy couldn't stand a-straddle of a salt sack, and hit with a spade."

Munro's parents may have known of the "Lost Pibroch." Perhaps they were hunting it, as they drifted from place to place in the "plains country." At any rate they named him Munro, and when he was sixteen he just "dropped out" of the family caravan, and located in business at Twin Hills—as a loafer.

Mr. Bibbs's head was an unfinished masterpiece. He had a rather pleasing face and good features. His eyes were large and brown, and had an eternal questioning look in them. The front part of his head, where the phrenologists say the talents roost, was well formed. Here it stopped. He had to wear his back hair long to keep his ears from rubbing together and chafing. There was strictly nobody at home in his back rooms. He had no initiative. It was useless to expect him to do anything of his own accord, but once he was shown he never forgot. He was clearly a Missouri sprout, grafted onto Texas stock.

Munro had one lone accomplishment—

he could play a jew's-harp and really make music, of a sort. He played so well, in fact, that a local wag said he must be a Jew. After the manner of such thriving municipalities as Twin Hills, the boy was promptly dubbed "Jew."

Vibration seemed to enthrall Munro. His favorite loafing place was the garage, where he would work for nothing, in order to hear the raucous noises that every one else hated. It was soon learned that the boy could locate a jar, or grind, in a motor simply by listening at it. His ear was peculiarly sensitive, and under more favorable conditions he might have made a wonderful musician. To him, the identity of the human voice was far more fixed and permanent than that of the features.

Munro learned to drive a jitney, and was trusted on short trips. He was careful and trustworthy, but among his most marked peculiarities was a wholesome fear of firearms. It was not a xanthic streak in his character, for he was afraid of nothing else. The mere sight of a gun or pistol paralyzed him with fear. He even disliked to hear them mentioned.

When the labor shortage was at its height Munro, who by that time was a good driver, was employed to drive the mail car between Twin Hills and Salton, a railroad town eighty miles to the west. You know the kind of car it was. Munro had studied it until he could take a pair of pliers, two joints of stove-pipe and a length of baling-wire and make a new one just like it.

He had five hours in which to make the

eighty miles. He always made it on time, on matter how much trouble he had. When time was lost it had to be made up, and it was made up. There was little passenger traffic on the mail line, and few persons ever took a second trip in Munro's car.

A passenger crawled out of the old, rusty chariot in front of the post-office one evening. He was somewhat battered, but still a wag. When asked how he had stood the trip, he said:

"We had a blow-out every mile for the first fifty miles after we left Salton, but here we are, on time. That driver has got a pair of seven-league boots. I'll bet odds he can make Barney Oldfield look like a crippled tarrapin."

If Munro had been any one else this should have put his picture in the local hall of fame, but he continued to be just that fool "Jew." He had tried various jobs, and this was the first one he had been able to hold past the teething period.

The city of Twin Hills, though eighty miles from a railroad, put on some airs. And why not? It was a county seat, and had a population of almost a thousand—chiefly ranchmen who lived there in order to send their children to school. The Twin Hills National was one of the richest banks in the State. Everybody in town that didn't have an automobile, had two. It was a hundred miles in the other direction to a railroad town, but it was a city, and the traffic from Twin Hills lay mostly that way. Salton was a jerk-water burg, and there was rarely a car on the mail route, except Munro's tin travesty, long since christened "Seven-League Lizzie."

The mail route was a lonely way. Leaving Twin Hills in the morning, Munro drove to Salton by noon. At one he started back, and threw his mail bags into the Twin Hills post-office at six. There were many stops on the line—at mail boxes—but only two post-offices. One of these, D Bar, was twenty miles from Salton. The other, Hale's store, was twenty miles from Twin Hills. Between them lay forty miles of open country, atmosphere, and an occasional mesquite thicket.

It is common knowledge that spontaneous homicide, and rough cussedness, have been

superseded by golf, poker and oil stock, in Texas. Yet, in recent years certain playful banditti have been matching wits with the rangers along the Mexican border. An exceptionally active band was performing some unusual stunts, robbing a bank here to-day, raiding a village a hundred miles away to-morrow. By the time the rangers reached the scene of one crime, the outlaws were committing another outrage a hundred miles away.

These gentlemanly freebooters were said to have come across from Mexico, but the real knowing ones more than whispered that it was a mistake. The work was too smooth, and too speedy, for robbers from the land of manyana. It was strongly hinted that Kinch Bedloe, a former ranger, who had run amuck and escaped, after being convicted of a crime, was at the head of the band.

Mr. Bedloe was known to be the best shot on the border, and to have a peculiar hankering after ranger meat since the force had turned against him. Munro had seen Kinch a few times, but it is doubtful if he would have known him by sight.

On a gray November morning, as Munro was giving old Lizzie her daily ration of juice, he overheard a conversation between the garage man and another gentleman:

"The bank was robbed over to Penasco, and the rangers is yellin' for help. Reck'n maybe Sheriff Bill Trueheart and some of his depities will go over thar. I'll bet fo' bits if Bill gets on the track of that Bedloe gang he'll make 'em holler calf rope." Thus the garage man, with a Texan's faith in his own sheriff.

"Yes, I reckon so," replied the other, "but Bill and his depities better stay right here at Twin Hills. Kinch Bedloe would just admire to raid this town, on account of him being tried and convicted in the deestrick co't here."

"Oh, this is clean out'n their range."

"Range hell! Them fellers ain't got no range. The last two robberies they does is over a hundred miles apart."

The further interesting conversation was lost in a sputter and roar, as old Lizzie responded to Munro's patient cranking, took the spark, and began to snort and tremble

like a bronk with its first saddle. But that was the last thing Munro heard, and it would be in the place where his brains ought to be, until he heard some other startling thing. He had nothing to do but think of it, all the way from there to Salton.

At one o'clock, as Munro was cranking his old tin wagon for the return trip, a grouchy customer came out and threw a package into the car.

"What air that?" asked Munro.

"Package. Can't you see?" returned the man gruffly.

"Yes, I see it are a package. Has it got ary gun, or pistial in it? If it are I won't haul it!"

"Nothin' of the kind in it, but you'd orter carry a gun, with them robbers rompin' around the country that way. It's uh cinch if the Gov'ment knowed you was packin' mail without no gun you'd lose yo' job," and the grouch turned away.

Lizzie gave a snort of contempt, and rattled her way out of town. She was on her good behavior to-day. Perhaps she just had a docile fit, or possibly Munro, who spent most of each night tying the old boat together after the hard day's run, had done an exceptionally good job the night before.

D Bar was passed without mishap. Midway the forty-mile run to Hale's was a considerable grove of mesquite that marked the half-way spot. As Munro drifted down the slope toward the grove, he drew out his old silver watch. Only three o'clock. Half an hour ahead of his schedule. If he had no bad luck he would not have to do any fast running this trip. This half-way place was twenty miles from a human habitation, except some ranches that stood back from the road, and about which Munro knew nothing.

The grouchy customer's remark about the robbers had renewed the activity of the boy's mind on the subject that had held it all day—Kinch Bedloe and his gang. He was not afraid. In the first place he knew of nothing that could catch him, if he saw it first. Nobody knew what he had done to old Lizzie—probably he didn't know himself—but on occasion he threw a frightful bunch of jazz into the flivver. In fact, Munro was not afraid of anything but

a gun. It had not occurred to him that if he should meet with the robbers they would have guns.

Munro approached the mesquite grove in high spirits. He was having fine luck. As he turned a sharp curve in an exceptionally dense thicket, he saw a big car set squarely across the road. He slowed down to pick his way around it, as it seemed to be abandoned. Just then a man stepped to the road on each side of him, and one of them commanded him to stop.

There was no need of a second warning—the men had pistols, and had them in their hands. They also had dirty bandanna handkerchiefs over their faces. The car stopped, and Munro, terribly frightened, slumped down in his seat.

"Throw that letter-pouch out here," commanded one of the men, and at the sound of his voice Munro almost fainted.

He threw the pouch, which lay at his feet, out on the ground.

"Now put you' hands on the steering wheel, and keep them there. We ain't going to hurt you if you don't start anything."

Start anything! Likely prospect, with a man leaning against the radiator and pointing a cannon at the cracked windshield of the mail-car.

The spokesman of this pleasant little party, whom Munro knew by his voice to be Kinch Bedloe, took out his knife and deliberately ripped a gash a foot long in the sacred abdomen of the old-fashioned leather mail-pouch. Then, thrusting in his hand, he drew out a package of letters.

Munro was speechless with horror at the sacrilege. The robber had not taken the trouble to carry his booty into the brush, but stood with one foot on the running-board and deftly ran through the package of letters, selecting two therefrom, and throwing the others back into the pouch.

Mr. Bedloe nonchalantly slit the envelopes with his knife, drew the letters out and read them, without even turning his back to show that he knew the rule about reading one's mail in company. Munro couldn't read much, but he could tell that those two letters were addressed to the Twin Hills National. There was no longer any doubt in his mind that the bank was to be robbed.

The robber finally returned even the violated letters to the pouch, picked it up and threw it back into the car, remarking: "There's you' mail, and little damage."

"Keep yo' eye on the gent while I fix his car," said the other man, speaking for the first time, and with that he raised the greasy, bespattered hood of the old boat, and, taking a pair of pliers from his pocket, worked swiftly for a minute. Then as he stood back from the car Munro found his voice.

"Don't take that, mister!" he cried. "She won't go a danged lick without it, and I'll be late with the mail."

"Sorry, son," replied the highwayman, as he stood with the commutator in his hand, "but I need this. You can look about and find a tarrapin shell to take its place. I've heared you could make that old Seven-League Lizzie run without her gizzard. This 'll be a good chance to try it."

Here Kinch Bedloe spoke again: "Sit in the car now, until we get out of sight, or you won't be able to even try to get away from here."

With that the two men turned and walked to the big machine that stood across the road, looking back from time to time as they went. Four other men stepped out of the brush, and Munro wondered, with a shudder, if they too had kept him covered with their guns all this time.

The six men climbed into the car. Munro heard the low whispering purr of the motor, as a master hand set the car in motion toward Twin Hills. There was no longer any doubt of their purpose. He sat staring at the car until it disappeared, keeping to the very letter of his instructions.

Finally, when he could no longer see the fleeing robbers, he climbed tremblingly down, and stood by the side of old Lizzie. When an automobile is dead, it is admittedly the most hopelessly dead thing in the world. Not only was Lizzie dead, but her side was open, her viscera exposed to the vulgar gaze, the inclement weather, and the like, while one of her vital organs had been snatched away by a ruthless hand.

Any other part of the car Munro would have undertaken to make, but this delicate little shell was unique and irreparable. It

was twenty miles to a place where he could find any sort of assistance. It would take him at least six hours to walk it, and probably longer, for he had used his legs but little for several months. Yet something must be done.

One little thing was spurring Munro on, almost to the verge of independent thinking. The president of the Twin Hills Nation had gone on his bond, and he felt a greater responsibility to the banker than to the Government. The bank was going to be robbed that night, and it was up to him to get word to President Volney.

With these thoughts in mind, Munro stood looking sadly at the exposed and mutilated internal system of Lizzie, and perhaps wondering at the change a mere trifle like the stopping of the heart could make in the going proclivities of anything.

A cold wind was blowing from the northeast, and there was a humming sound. Munro looked up and saw the long-distance telephone line that ran from Twin Hills to Salton. This reminded him that there was a telephone at Hale's, but again he thought of the distance. The bank would probably be robbed before he could walk there. He remembered that a wire branched off from the main line, about a half mile back the road.

Where did that wire go? To some ranch-house, probably. How far was it? Certainly not more than twenty miles, perhaps far less than that. Munro was about to develop dormant reasoning powers.

In a few minutes he began dragging the mail bags into a thicket. When they were all safely hidden he put on his old mackintosh, crawled under the wire fence, and trudged off. He followed the branch wire over cañons, through thickets and cactus-beds, for what seemed an interminable distance. At last, just as darkness was coming on, he saw a ranch cabin, and noted that the wire ran into it.

He approached and hailed the house. There was no answer to his call. Munro was miserable. Chilled, hungry, tired in body and racked in mind, he called again and again. Still there was no answer. He had to get to that telephone. If he went in, and there was any one at home, the fel-

low might have a gun, but it was the last resort. He approached the door, found it unlocked, pushed it open and entered. There was no one there.

A lonesome place than that cabin, with its cold, dead ashes on the hearth, dirty plates and cups on the table, discarded clothing lying about the room, and a generally forsaken air, would be hard to imagine. But Munro had little time to think of these things. Nothing could make him more frightened, lonesome, and miserable than he was.

The telephone instrument was fastened to a board, and the board nailed to the wall. Munro approached it, hesitated a moment, then took hold of the handle timidly, and turned it with fear and trembling. It failed to ring!

The telephone was as dead as old Lizzie. Again and again Munro turned the little crank. He took down the receiver and put it to his ear. He yelled into the transmitter imploringly, then listened, but the only sound he heard was the wind whistling around that cabin.

Tears started in his eyes. He was helpless to do a service for his friend and benefactor. As he stood muttering prayers, curses and supplications into the transmitter, his voice suddenly choked and stopped. It was growing quite dark in the room. He peered out of the open door into the gathering gloom, and turned back to the telephone. A few minutes later he stumbled from the cabin, and took his way back to where he had left his old tin terror, lying in a comatose state. Hard luck was camping on his trail.

The wind was rising, and the old mackintosh furnished scant protection. The boy stumbled on in the gathering darkness, his head bent to the storm. Some guiding instinct, or supernatural agency, kept him from going astray in the darkness, and after a long while he came out in the road near his flivver. He had made the best fight he could, and dead though it was, the old car would be some company in his misery.

II.

THE night operator at Twin Hills was in bad humor. She had been trying for

half an hour to raise the night shift at Salton. The high wind was interfering with the lines. The operator was saying some very uncomplimentary things about the Salton service, when a voice came faintly over the line:

"Hello! Twin Hills? Tell Mr. Volney Kinch Bedloe's outfit is going to rob the bank to-night."

"Who's that talking? Get off the wire!" snapped the operator.

"Oh, for God's sake, tell Mr. Volney quick, Miss Ella!" came the faint voice again.

"Well, who is talking?"

"Why, it's—" but the line was out.

The wire trouble was very simple. Kinch Bedloe, who intended to travel in a general westerly direction when his business at Twin Hills was finished, had cut the wire at the instant when the first two words of the reply were spoken. Failing to cut that wire a little sooner was a grievous error on the part of Mr. Bedloe.

Munro fished his mail bags out of the thicket and put them back in the car. Then he crawled in, and tried to get out of the wind. He was half frozen, hungry, and thoroughly miserable. He had tried to do his friend a favor and had failed. Old Lizzie was his only real intimate on earth, and, though she was apparently cold in death, Munro cuddled to the lifeless carcass, and tried to find comfort, though it was too cold to sleep.

Some time after midnight, the boy started from a frozen stupor. A car was coming from toward Salton. He jumped out into the middle of the road, and the lights of the oncoming machine picked him up as it came to a stop.

"Hello, podner! In trouble?" asked the driver.

"Yes," replied Munro, through his chattering teeth.

"Well, you ain't got nothin' on me. I never been over this road before, and I don't know where I'm at. They told me it was forty mile from D Bar to Hale's. That's the place where I want to go, but it seems to me like I've come forty mile already."

"You're on the right road, and just half-

way. Got ary old commutator in yo' tool box?" said Munro.

"Yes. Bust yo'n?"

"No. Lost it."

"Lost it. What the—" then, remembering that one of his passengers was a lady, the driver fished out the old commutator, and held a light, while Munro put it in place.

As he stood looking at the rusty old scrap heap, the driver said: "That old boat shore looks like the cats had been draggin' her around."

"Yes, she's been run some, and is right smart tore up, but if I kin get her into the garage I kin fix her so's she'll go," replied Munro, and then as he reached for the crank, "Just foller me. I go by Hale's."

There was a cough and a roar. Lizzie rattled like she was laughing with hysteria. Munro climbed to the seat, and the astonished driver saw the old junk heap leap forward into the darkness and disappear. He followed with all the juice he had, but he never saw seven-league Lizzie again. She was on her last trip. He reached Hale's, and the swearing postmaster told him it was the mail car, the mail had been changed and the car gone half an hour, and that the mail carrier had gone nuts.

III.

MEANTIME, just at midnight, a big car had driven down the silent streets of the sleeping city of Twin Hills. Its motor murmured in the lowest tones possible for a moving car. It stopped in front of the bank, and five men got out. Two of them approached the door, and soon had it open. One man remained in the car, and had his foot on the starter.

Just as the first of the robbers stepped through the door of the bank, jets of flame stabbed the darkness on the other side of the street, and a hail of bullets swept the bandits from their feet.

At 4 A. M. Sheriff Bill Trueheart and his deputy, with Banker Volney, the postmaster, and other astonished citizens stood in a little knot in front of the bank, talking. They had laid the six robbers in a row on the sidewalk, all dead, and were waiting the coming of daylight.

"Who sent that message?" asked the sheriff.

"Search me," replied the banker. "Whoever it was, he did us one good turn. The operator called me up about an hour ago, and told me somebody was trying to warn me about the bank robbery, and the wire went out. I— Hello! What's that coming down the street?"

Two dim lights came weaving along the way, bobbing up and down like a cork in a raffle, turned in to the post-office and stopped.

"It's that fool Jew, with the mail. Didn't get in last night. Reck'n that danged old rattle-trap finally went to pot," said the postmaster.

Munro threw out the mail bags, and went on to the garage, which was near the bank. When he had spotted Lizzie, that is, what was left of her, he sought the banker in the little knot of men.

"Mr. Volney, kin I see you in the garage a minute?" he said.

The banker went with him, and as they stood by the side of the old wreck, Munro said:

"You are on my bond, and I ought to tell you. I busted into a house last night."

"Broke into a house! Whose house?"

"I—I don't know, sir. I—I didn't mean no harm. This is all I took, and it ain't hurt none," and he pulled a telephone receiver from the pocket of his old mackintosh.

"What the—" began Volney.

"Them fellers helt me up yesterday, and took my commutator. I knowed they was fixin' to rob the bank, and I couldn't do nothin'. I follered a wire till I come to a house. They wa'n't nobody at home, an' I busted in to the telephone. It wouldn't work, and I took this."

"What on earth did you want with that?"

"Why, I seen a fellow talk with one once, by sticking one of the pins into a tie ware in the insulator, and holding the other pin against a ground ware. So I found a ground ware, clumb the pole, and tried it, and—"

"Hey! Come here, fellers!" yelled Volney. "Here's the duck says he sent that

message, but I think he's crazy. White, you are a telephone man. Can a fellow talk with nothing but the receiver?"

"Yes," said White, "if he knows how," and he explained that he would have to wait until some one came on the line.

"How long was you up on that pole?" asked Volney.

"I don't know, sir. Hit seemed like some time," said Munro.

"I'll bet it did, cold as that wind was."

"Well, I'll be damned," swore big Bill Trueheart. "I don't want none of the reward for ketchin' Kinch Bedloe's gang."

The men marveled at the feat, while

Munro stood shivering. Finally he said in quavering tones:

"Mr. Volney, I didn't mean to do no harm. Besides that, Kinch Bedloe gutted the mail bag, and read a lot of your letters, and I'll be arrested for it, dang his ornery soul," and Munro's voice trailed off into silence.

"No, you won't be arrested for it," said Volney, with a husky note in his voice. "Go on to bed, son, and get some sleep. That ranch cabin belongs to me. You don't have to tinker old Lizzie any more. You have a better job—with the telephone company."

THE EXILE'S DEVOTION

IF I forswear the art divine
That glorifies the dead,
What comfort then can I call mine,
What solace seek instead?
For from my birth our country's fame
Was life to me, and love;
And for each loyal Irish name
Some garland still I wove.

I'd rather be the bird that sings
Above the martyr's grave,
Than fold in fortune's cage my wings
And feel my soul a slave;
I'd rather turn one simple verse,
True to the Gaelic ear,
Than Sapphic odes I might rehearse
With senates listening near.

Oh, native land! Dost ever mark
When the world's din is drowned
Betwixt the daylight and the dark,
A wandering, solemn sound
That on the western wind is borne
Across thy dewy breast?
It is the voice of those who mourn
For thee in the far West.

My native land! My native land!
Live in my memory still.
Break on my brain, ye surges grand!
Stand up, mist-covered hill!
Still on the mirror of the mind
The scenes I love I see;
Would I could fly on the western wind,
My native land, to thee!

Thomas D'Arcy McGee

Yellow Soap

by Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Cecilia of the Pink Roses."

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

THE smell of yellow laundry soap and the Milton kitchen were among the earliest recollections of Theodore Hargraves Brady, illegitimate son of Delia Riggs, washerwoman. At the Milton house, at six years of age, he had met and fallen in love with Frances Milton, whose mother had endured for years a silent persecution at the hands of her inhuman husband, whom people held, however, to be victim rather than tyrant. Hargraves, despite his wretched environment, advanced rapidly in his studies, seeing Francis occasionally, but painfully conscious of the wide gulf between; and, following his apprenticeship in an iron foundry, the first great grief of his life arrived with the death of his mother. She had always wanted him to be a gentleman, like his father; and now, at sixteen, leaving the city for Harrisburg, he fell in with a hobo named Timothy Duggan, who, when Hargraves was asleep in a box-car, robbed him of his sole capital, nine dollars, together with his other belongings.

But after being thrown out of the train by a "shack," Hargraves, disposing of a rabbit's foot to a negro lunchman for five dollars, again met Tim at a vile lodging-house, the latter returning all but a dollar. Hargraves's later experience with Mae Delaney, a daughter of the underworld, was followed by his friendship for one Pete, a hobo with a past; and it was while adventuring with this gentleman that he came upon a murdered girl in an abandoned shack, pocketing a gold locket bearing the initials "E. B." Separating from Pete through the latter's running foul of the police, the boy, after an adventure with a certain "Coke," visited a family named Brainard as a result of a newspaper item concerning a missing girl with the initials E. B. The Brainards were poor; Elsie, the wife, was always ill; Charlie, her husband, thin and anemic. Satisfying the Brainard woman that the girl had died a natural death, at the couple's invitation, Hargraves (now known as "Gravy" to the denizens of the underworld) accepted their hospitality.

In the night the woman entered his room, as the result of her former habit of looking after her daughter.

"Ain't I done it again!" said Elsie. "I always come in here to see that she wuz covered, and seems like that I can't get over it—I done it fer so long that now I do it when I sleep. Excuse me, mister; I forgot."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"NEXT."

THE week after that, Charlie confided in Hargraves about his queer-looking apparatus in the extra rented room, and Elsie had a bad hemorrhage.

Charlie was an inventor, after his day of shoveling coal had stopped. His room, filled with queer tripods, screens, and various sorts of little boxes with handles, was the laboratory. The things he was working on were the new pictures that moved. He felt that he had the proper way to simplify them. "Now," he said, "we set and look at railroad trains movin' an' think it's wonderful, but it's comin' to more 'n

that. In ten years they'll be makin' plays, an' instead of a dollar, chargin' mebbe a quarter to see 'em!"

Hargraves inwardly shook his head.

Then Charlie turned the crank, and a fat negro mammy bathed her small son, who resented the operation. He crawled out of the tub, she set him back, he crawled out. It was the same few feet of film, repeated and repeated. That and oncoming trains, racing pictures, and short films of that variety, were the heights of motion-picture achievement.

"What I wanta do," said Charlie, far-seeing eyes on the screen which mirrored the flecked and flickering picture, "is to go out West where the sun shines alla time,

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This story began in *The Argosy* for January 10.

git a job so I kin git enough money fer film, an' then go to it. I can make them pictures like they was alive, and it's coming. Folks is going to 'em like they goes to theaters now. Actresses like that there little Minnie Maddern will be bowing to the audience from the screen, an' then the curtain will shoot up, an' the play begin."

Hargraves looked at the flecked picture. Charlie's dream seemed far away.

"Think o' the women that scrubs offices," went on Charlie, "savin' their money and once a week goin' to a show and then settin' there, fergittin' all their troubles and thinkin' they're the grand ladies on the screen."

Hargraves thought of Delia. "If that could be done," he answered, "a man should be perfectly happy. It would be a great thing." His mother, he knew, had never seen the inside of a real theater. All of her happy memories were one—a trip to Tolchester Beach, Maryland. Certainly they needed gilt, that sort. Even if it were tawdry and chipped in spots, they needed gilt.

"It's comin'," echoed Charlie with some finality. "There ain't a bit of doubt about it. It's comin'."

Elsie's hemorrhage came on Sunday morning when Charlie was having his weekly bath and Hargraves was deep in a Sunday paper. He was reading about the people of Mars, who were said to have horns and six legs. And there were pictures of them which somewhat resembled typhoid germs.

Elsie, washing dishes on the back of the stove, suddenly began to cough with more than usual energy. Hargraves looked up. He saw her sway, and dropped his paper and reached her quickly. Then it came. He held her in his arms while she choked, spluttered, and nearly died from the coming of her warm, air-bubbled blood. Charlie, very damp and clothed only in a gray-dirty towel, came hurrying in.

They did not move Elsie, but piled quilts about her and slipped a small cushion beneath her head. After a few moments she smiled wanly at Hargraves, and he smoothed her damp, cold forehead. After

perhaps a half hour, she slept, her mouth open and her hand, outstretched, clutching spasmodically.

Hargraves finished up the washing of the dishes very quietly and mopped up a pool of blood. Then he straightened the table cover and sat down to watch. Charlie had gone to see the doctor.

It was very quiet in the little room. The cheap alarm clock ticked heavily, and now and then Elsie gasped, but otherwise the silence was so deep it throbbed. The fire leaped once and the mica doors all shone. A curled and fly-specked calendar over the table occupied Hargraves's attentions for a moment, and then a moth-eaten worsted motto.

The motto said: "The Lord Will Provide," and it was surrounded by pansies and some queer-looking growths that seemed remotely related to roses. Hargraves smiled at the motto. That particular one, so much loved by his people, always made him smile. He did not believe it, at least if the Lord did provide, he provided too much in some cases and not enough in others. He speculated on this and quite remade the world. It is very simple, to do when one is seventeen.

When he looked at Elsie again her eyes were open. Kneeling beside her, he took her cold, damp hand in his and spoke.

"How are yuh?" he asked.

"Fine—"

"Honest?"

She nodded. Hargraves pushed back her hair and smiled again. If he were only making enough, Charlie could stay home and care for her. He wondered, after three days of shoveling coal, how soon he could expect a raise. He wondered how Elsie could be cared for. He did not see how they would dare leave her. She spoke as if she understood his thoughts.

"I want fer to go to the hospital fer a while," she said. "Annie Mulany, she lives in the basement, she went last year, and they treated her grand. They don't all cut yuh up, them doctors. If I could go to that there hospital where she went, I'd go. I think mebbe I oughta fer a while."

"That's a good idea."

"But I ain't strong enough to go ask 'em if they'll have me," she said, a worried look creeping in her eyes.

"I'll go this afternoon and talk to them," said Hargraves. "What hospital was it?"

"Cortland, out near—"

The door opened in the small, dark entry, and Charlie came tiptoeing in. "Such damned rot!" he said excitedly as he entered the room. "Sez yuh oughta have the windows open! *Sleep* with 'em that way! I sez: 'Doc, she's sick, she's real sick. Layin' there vomiting blood fierce, she's sick!' But he can't see no reason. Won't give me no medicine, but sets there and talks about *windahs*! Gawd!" He turned an accusing eye on Elsie and asked a question.

"Have yuh took yer consumptive cure regular?"

"Kinda, Charlie, but sometimes, I forget—"

"Yes, an' look! Now ain't this smart? Here yuh get sick on us and carry on high! Old woman, I dunno what I'd do—"

Charlie stopped speaking suddenly, and Hargraves got up from his stiffened knees and left the room.

Hargraves started for the hospital at two that afternoon. He wished his clothes were better looking. He knew that clothes influenced answers in most places, and he wanted the right sort of answer.

He walked to and fro in front of the big stone building several times, and then squared his shoulders, turned in. The corridors were wide and glitteringly white and they had long rubber strips down the centers, and the air was queer and clean-smelling. He asked a passing nurse where he should go and she directed him to a desk behind which sat an efficient-looking woman garbed in white. A good many people stood around waiting to speak to her.

Just now a working man, twisting his greasy hat, stood in front of the desk.

"You see, Sunday is not our visiting day just now," the nurse was saying.

The man swallowed hard. His collar was low, and his Adam's apple, aggressive and covered with stubbly beard, showed all his emotions. "I know, missus," he answered,

"but I gotta work week days an' I did feel fer to see her. She sets a store by her paw. I thought seein' as I *gotta* work week days—being afraid to ask the boss fer time off—I could see her."

The nurse shook her head. "I'm sorry," she said.

"Well," said the man, and then fumbled in his pocket. "Yuh give her this here; she's partial to 'em." It was an orange, little, and evidently bought at a cheap fruit stand. The nurse took it, and the man turned, his heavy boots clattering as he went off down the hall.

Several others approached the desk in turn, and then Hargraves. He told his story, was questioned, and the nurse shook her head. They did not take consumptives nor incurables. Hargraves had not thought of this possibility.

"We could pay a little," he said.

"That makes no difference," the cool-looking person in white informed him. She was afraid he would have a hard time getting a place for his mother—no?—well, whoever it was. There was a tuberculosis hospital, but it was a pay institution, and hard even at that to get admission. It was too bad, and she was sorry. Then she straightened a flying-winged cap and pushed back a lock of hair with a somewhat weary gesture and said: "Next."

CHAPTER XIX.

SETTLING.

HARGRAVES went down the steps of the hospital slowly. He was filled with disappointment and in no way anxious to reach the flat where Elsie and Charlie waited for his news. He wondered what they would do—what they could do?

Half-way down on a spot where the steps were level with the terrace for a few feet, he saw a girl sitting on the balustrade. Something in her pose seemed familiar and he looked again. Looking, he saw it to be Mae.

"Hello," he said stiffly.

"Hello," she answered, without smiling. He saw that she was very thin and white.

"What you doing here?" he asked.

"Been sick—pneumonia. I'm just out. He sat down by her. "I'm sorry," he said. Mae did not answer. She looked him over, his clothes, his hands, even his coal-blackened finger nails and his worn shoes.

"Working?" she inquired.

"Unloading coal."

Mae spoke quickly. "I know you ain't got any use for me," she said. "I thought I'd die before I'd ever speak to you again, and as fer asking you a favor—well, a week ago, if I knowed I would, I'd a keeled over. But—"

"What is it?"

"Gravy, can you lend me a few dollars?"

"I haven't got 'em. I don't get paid till a week from Wednesday. Honest, Mae, I don't. I—"

But Hargraves was talking to space, Mae had got up and was moving quickly away from him. He caught up to her and saw that she was crying.

"Mae," he said, "before God I've only got nineteen cents! But—but I'll help you somehow. *Don't cry! Don't!*" She tried to stop, tried to smile, and failed miserably with both efforts.

"I didn't wanta get well," she said, "but I did and then they shoved me out, and every one I know outa town. All the girls gone, no fellah except you that would loan me money without—without—" She stopped and sobbed weakly.

"I'll get it somehow," said Gravy. He put a steadying hand on her arm and seeing a policeman looking at them curiously led Mae down the steps. They walked for a few moments, the girl dabbing her eyes and catching her breath spasmodically and the boy staring straight ahead, his jaw set. After a half block or so he spoke.

"I'm sorry I treated you so," he said gruffly.

"It—it wasn't nothing."

"Yes, it was. I hadn't a right to. No one has any right to judge anybody else—I know it now—nor be mean to 'em, for they suffer enough themselves without its being rubbed in. I know—I been there since we met, and—I'm awful sorry."

Mae was crying harder again. She fumbled and found Hargraves's hand and

slipped hers in it. He squeezed it reassuringly.

"Come in," he said after a block's walk. "Come in and we'll spend some of my fortune on a cup of coffee and some sinkers." Mae laughed a trifle unsurely and they turned in a flopping door on the glass of which was glued a piece of paper. The piece of paper held the menu of the serve-yourself lunch for that day.

Mae slipped down in a broad-armed chair and watched the boy who stood by a counter well back in the room. Once in a while she sniffed. When he came back carrying his purchase she took a cup and setting it on the chair arm, looked up.

"I thank you ever so much," she said in a low voice. Then she turned attention to the cup, stirring the sugar well. Both Hargraves and she understood that the thank you was for a larger thing than the coffee, that it was for the largest thing in life—sympathy without understanding—true tolerance.

"Yer welcome," said Hargraves Bradly. "It wasn't anything."

For a few weeks Hargraves worked hard, and then a union strike tangled up coal shipments, and he, with many others, was laid off. It was remarkably unfortunate, for Elsie had grown acutely sick, many things were needed for her comfort, and Charlie without materials, and hence his anodyne of work, grew almost insanely morbid.

Valentine's Day found Hargraves sitting in Conny Malony's saloon trying to look as if he were going to buy a drink, while he really absorbed warmth. He had walked miles in search of a job, which he found had been snapped up before he reached it, and the winds from the lake were cruel. He thought bitterly of his need for work. He had to get some money, somehow! Charlie, who had slept on the lounge in the kitchen, had cried all night. Hargraves had awakened and heard him.

It is not pleasant to hear a man sob out the name of a murdered small girl. It was not pleasant to reflect that his wife was dying in the room adjoining. At about four, Mae, who through Hargraves's good

offices, was now living with the Brainards, had knocked on Hargraves's door.

"Gravy," she'd whispered, "come out and play cards with him or something. *She* hears it."

And half awake, shivering and aware of his ever-present torture, hunger, he had got up to wrap a blanket about himself and play pinochle with Charlie. The lamp between them had flickered as their hands moved on the table and shadows dimmed the dirt-streaked walls. Now and then they heard Mae move in the next room. Her voice, remarkably gentle in tone, came once and again when she advised Elsie to "lay down and get her good sleep," or informed Elsie that "morning hasn't come yet, deary; lay still!"

"Yuh done a good thing when yuh brung her here," said Charlie with a sniff. "I got a meld. She's smart and she's doing good by Elsie. Yesterday she put a brick on the gas meter, too. It don't pump so fast now. Yer play."

Hargraves played. As he played he recalled Mae's installation. They had walked after their party in the quick-lunch room, walked toward the building that sheltered the Brainards. Hargraves had done some quick thinking, but had come to no conclusion. Mae had begun to lag, and looking at her he became full of fear.

"We should have ridden on the cable car," he said, "instead of getting that coffee! I am a dub! Sit down here!" Mae had smiled faintly, slipped down on a step while Hargraves tried to shelter her from the wind. "I'll take yuh to the Brainards; they're good folks, Mae, and you can have my room for to-night."

Mae had nodded stupidly. She hadn't sensed much, for she had been overcome by sudden weakness and was trying with all her strength not to faint. Then after a moment or so they had gone on, the girl swaying, but still smiling, and the boy staring straight ahead. "Here," said Hargraves and they turned in a rickety building. Mae swayed more and, with her smile stiffly set, closed her eyes.

Hargraves caught her, picked her up; and carried her up the many flights. At the top of the third stair he paused. He was

strong and Mae was light, but even at that it had been work. She was remarkably relaxed and awkward to handle.

Looking down on Mae he wondered whether any one would ever carry the little Milton girl up many flights of stairs and then, as always, he had shut off his queer dreams of the little girl of the other half with a snap. After that he toiled on, wearing a not-too-pleasant smile. Mae, coming to herself, looked into the face of the woman who was starved for mothering.

"There, there, deary!" said Elsie. "Yuh can stay here till yuh get well. There, there!"

"I aint—" began Mae, and then she hid her face.

Hargraves had silenced her sharply. "It's what you *are* here," he'd said, "not what you *were*. I told you they were awful good folks."

"There, there!" said Elsie. "Don't fret, honey, don't fret!"

Mae had stayed. After Hargraves lost his work, she once suggested asking help of some one she knew, but had been silenced effectually.

"Ain't you getting enough to eat?" asked Hargraves sharply. Mae nodded. She knew he was not, but she dared not say it.

"Well, then," said Hargraves, "everything's O. K. I don't want any help from that sort, Mae. And—if you take it you leave here. Understand?"

There had been a silence after that. Mae had bent over the dish-pan and Hargraves had glared at a week-old paper, not at all sensing its print.

"I'll wipe the dishes for you," said Hargraves after a moment.

"You don't need to."

"I'd just as soon," he answered; and after he'd wiped them and hung up the towel on the line over the stove, he told her, with seventeen-year-old reserve, that he hadn't meant to be cross, but that he had meant what he said. Mae didn't answer, but after he left the room she hid her face in his coat which hung against the door.

Hargraves looked around the saloon of Conny Maloney. He saw the free lunch,

was unable to look away, put his hand in his pocket, found five cents, drew a long, shaking breath and—fell.

He endeavored to eat a sandwich with reserve, but failed. It lasted for exactly one minute and seventeen seconds. After this he sipped his beer slowly and tried to ignore the scrutiny of a sandy-haired bartender. The beer was soon gone, too, and Hargraves tilted his glass and drank, rather, sucked, the last drops. He made a noise that Delia used to smack him for making. She used to smack him with vigor and on a rather intimate spot. He remembered it, sighed, then smiled with a leery hint. A gentleman!

"'Nother?" asked the sandy-haired man in the soiled white apron, coming out from behind the stained and battered bar.

"Nò," said Hargraves, recalling the state of his finances. "Maybe later."

The man put his hands on the table and leaned forward.

"Broke?" he inquired. "Bet you are!"

"What the hell does that matter to you?" demanded Hargraves, with a sullen glare.

"I been there," said the barkeeper, "I been there. I bet yuh ain't hed yer collar laundried fer a month."

"Seems to be your busy day for bets," he was answered.

The man looked at him for a second or two, and then disappeared in the direction of the kitchen. A little later a waiter appeared. He carried a tray loaded with a platter of ham and eggs, a pot of coffee, huge slices of bread, and some unnaturally yellow butter.

"Jim ordered 'em fer yuh," said the man. "You don't have to pay." Hargraves looked, tried to leave the place, but stood staring because the smells had made his stomach ache clear through to his back. He found himself following the waiter to a table, found himself sitting down, and then he leaned forward, stuck a tin fork into some ham, and began. Strangely, tears came to his eyes with his first bite. He blinked angrily.

"Go slow there, bub," said the sandy-haired man, who had come up and stood looking on. "Yuh ain't a ostrich!"

Hargraves looked up. The bartender of the soiled apron smiled down on him. He had a rather gentle, good-bad face. One of those that age looks on with question and that youth turns from—so sure is youth of its clear-cut judgment.

"What 'd you do it for?" asked Hargraves. He wiped some egg from his mouth on the back of his hand.

"Me?" said the man. "Oh, I dunno." He half turned away in embarrassment and then stepped back and reaching in a pocket brought forth some change and laid three cents on the table. "There," he said, "have your collar laundried. There ain't nothing on Gawd's earth that 'll make a man more down, nor keep him lower than a collar turned fifteen times."

Hargraves pocketed the three cents and the man turned back to his post.

"I can't thank you," said Hargraves, after he had finished quite everything. "I'll just say if—if God is any kinder than you were, then — well —" Hargraves stopped.

The sandy-haired bartender was shaking something in a gleaming aluminum shaker. He smiled and, still shaking, spoke.

"Kid," he said, "that wasn't nothin'. You turn up here to-morrow noon." He stopped shaking, opened the can and poured out its contents, then he shoved the drink across the bar to a man who was reading a morning paper. After that he looked at the watching boy and smiled.

"Did yuh ever think," he said, "that mebbe Gawd is the decent things you and me and the other fellah does? Just that and no more. Sometimes I do, and I reckon if He was just that He'd be strong enough to boss things. Ain't that true?"

Hargraves moved along, for the bartender had gone down the counter and was busy before a group who had just entered. He paused in his work long enough to wave at Hargraves and to call a cheery, "See yuh to-morrow, kid!" Hargraves felt a warmth inside, and he walked with his old time swing.

The afternoon was full of luck. His services were used for advertising a hair tonic until six, when he shed his flopping boards and went toward a restaurant which

made a specialty of sea foods. Here he sat until eight in a damp and dreary little cubby-hole opening oysters.

He pounded monotonously and occasionally; when he used a knife his clumsy, cold hands would let it slip and twice he cut himself. But—he had enough money to keep things going for a while, and even the blood dripping over his chapped and raw cold hands did not subdue him. *Pound!* Charlie could buy that wine for Elsie now and maybe pay the grocer too. *Pound!* That shell had been a tough one.

He could buy the meals for to-morrow, anyway, and Charlie could save that much. Damn it, to trouble to open an oyster and find it spoiled! Outside of his room a passing waitress called a question about a valentine. "Did youse get one?" she had asked of one of the cooks.

Hargraves remembered a purple-and-red-and-gold affair he'd sent to the little Milton girl. He remembered waiting, a gawky boy of ten, in the Milton kitchen for his mother, and she had come out and said: "Look at my valentine. Isn't it beautiful! And I don't know *who* sent it!"

He dropped his hammer, and sat for a moment idle. He smiled. Then he remembered oysters and the pressing need for money, and went on with his work.

Theodore Hargraves Bradley soon learned a good deal about the sandy-haired bar-keeper of Conny Maloney's joint. He learned that he helped a great many down-and-outers, that he was worshiped by persons of patched shoes, and that he always went home with much money not legally his, secreted about his person.

His habit was to tie the legs of his union suit close about the ankles, do some clever manipulation of the cash register and then after some moments scratch his chest, adjust his collar, or settle his tie. This did not in the least bother the faith of his worshippers, but, rather added to it.

One Sunday night, Hargraves with two other persons of shining-seamed clothes went home with Jim to lunch.

They were introduced to Mrs. Jim, who was fat and comfortable, chuckled often, called the guests "boys," and made them

welcome. They ate in a glaringly red dining-room which held a many-mirrored sideboard, stag heads, and other atrocities. They had potato salad, cold ham, coffee, and much bread and butter and a preserve. Mrs. Jim said the salad was "fierce" and Jim, throwing a celery stalk at her, remarked that she wanted to be "joshed." The atmosphere, whatever else, was quite without restraint.

Jim's little boy and girl were at the table, too. They were partly slangy, spoke often, and laughed with the rest when Jim, with gusto, repeated some of their bad-mannered remarks.

An old man waited on the table, and joined in the conversation now and then; although, for the most part, his utterings were to be guessed at, as his teeth were quite absent. The children called him "Pappy," and he evidently adored them.

"Him?" said Jim, after they had finished supper and gone to the "parlor." "Oh, he used to come around to the place, drunk mostly; and then I found out he didn't have no home, sleeping in stables and on park benches mostly; and I sez to my wife, I sez: 'Ol' woman, we need a nurse maid fer them there kids, and yuh could go out shopping more'—so we agreed and he come."

Jim began to laugh. Hargraves looked up with inquiry.

"Talented, too," said Jim. "Look what the ol' fool brought in yesterday."

He got up with his words, and opened an elaborate wooden box. From it came, like the buzz of swarming insects, clock-ticks—little, big, mama, papa, baby ticks. Hargraves looked in. There were at least twenty or thirty clocks, of all sizes and shapes. They were, he was led to understand, Pappy's souvenirs from the better shops.

"He gets them streaks," said Jim. "One day he brought in seventy-two rhinestone combs. Went to every department-store in town. Not a lazy bone in his body."

"Ever get caught?" asked Hargraves. He heard a snicker, and turned to see Pappy, who was proudly listening.

"Tell him about last Thursday," said Jim.

"It was canes that day," said Pappy. "I felt 'em coming on when I got up, and I seen a swell one in Marshall Field's; so I stood around, and after a while I lifted it and walked out like it was mine, swinging it grand. Well, one of them hair-oiled puppies that floorwalks come up, showing his teeth. He raised hell.

"I says: 'I shall report you, and you will lose the sale of this cane.' I glared at him something fierce—accosting me that fresh—and he keeps showing his teeth, and then I changed tactics. I says: 'Perhaps I *have* been hasty,' and reached in my pockets, letting on to be bewildered like at having no change; and then I told him to send it to my address on Michigan Boulevard. I dunno whether he done it or not. He apologized pretty. He was a nice young man when he seed I was wealthy and lived on the boulevard and had just forgot my change."

Hargraves laughed.

"Looka here," said Jim. "You're down and out just now. Why don't you just help yourself a little? Easy enough if a man just keeps his eyes open. Oughta see the way I come home! Lord, sleigh bells ain't in it! I tie my underclothes around the legs. Just about every other silver dollar goes inside—union suits *are* convenient—sometimes I feel like I wore armor when I hit the flat."

"Twenty-two dollars yesterday," said Mrs. Jim; then she went over to the piano. "Let's sing," she said. "Whatcha want, Jim?"

"Rock of Ages," answered Jim. To Hargraves's astonishment they were soon clustering about the badly tuned piano singing "Rock of Ages," Jim's well-aimed baritone quavering with feeling.

It was, he decided, "just the darndest hash of a world! There was no classification." There was no entirely good, nor any entirely bad, but flashes; flashes of white and black, which often merged and ended up by being white-flecked gray. He left at ten and walked home slowly.

Stars made the night lovely, and the night made him dream.

"I never forgot you," he said to the beautiful young woman who walked with

him, "even though at times I had no right to think of you"—that made him frown. He wished he didn't have to say it! "But I always did. I couldn't help it!"

"Honest, did you?" she replied. He frowned again. She wouldn't say that, he felt sure. Somehow it sounded wrong. He considered what she would say for several blocks, until, still considering, he turned into the building which had grown well known, and began to climb long stairs.

Still thinking of a little, fair-haired maiden, grown up, he turned the door-knob and went into the flat. Mae was sitting by the table, asleep. She roused as he entered and smiled.

"Why didn't you go to bed?" he said.

"I wasn't sleepy," said Mae, yawning, and then joined his laugh. He lowered the lamp and pushed her toward her room. For a long time she stood in the dark by her window. She tried to believe that his hand on her shoulder had been a little lingeringly tender, but she could not even dream it true.

Across from her window on the dark bricks she saw the face of a hard-working, worried boy who often looked on her and saw her not at all; or, when he did, was gently kind and nothing more.

CHAPTER XX.

YEARS AND THE LOSS AND THE START.

A BOY of twenty-one or so sat on one side of a kitchen table reading. He was a thin-faced, lanky chap in whom one felt reserve, until he smiled, when one forgot reserve and felt but warmth and truth. Across from him sat Mae Delaney, darning socks. Now and again she looked up from her mending and at the lanky one, but her eyes made no dent in his consciousness. He was really sailing down the Ohio on a raft with a boy called *Huck Finn*.

Once he chuckled a little, and Mae smiled gently. Then she folded a pair of socks and tossed them in a basket, took another pair, ran a hand in them and looked for the holes that were always there. Hargraves glanced up.

"Mine?" he asked. Mae nodded.

"That's awfully decent of you!" he added warmly, even while his eyes had gone back to the page. She smiled and again gently. Once that detachment had hurt; now she rather loved it, for it was intensely his.

"If I'd 'a' seen myself doing this five years ago," she thought, "setting in the park on Sunday fer a treat and working like a dog the rest of the week. Two holes right in the same spot as those of the last pair. Must be a nail in his shoes."

In the adjoining room Charlie moved about, occasionally pounded lightly on thin metal, muttering all the while. From the stove came the sizzle of something boiling and the gas meter ticked discouragingly.

Mae let her mending drop and looked at Hargraves. Something in her mind pushed away the present and held up to view many incidents in years gone by.

"I shoulda took that there consumptive cure more regular," she heard Elsie say. She saw Charlie gripping the arms of the chair in which he sat, gripping them until his roughened, reddened knuckles grew white. Then she saw Elsie turn over, whisper: 'Elizabeth,' and go to sleep. Mae leaned over her and touched her forehead. Then she turned to a widely staring inventor and whispered: "Charlie, I guess this time she's went."

She remembered the cruel weeks after the funeral, a funeral to which the family had walked. She remembered Charlie's weeping at every meal and his utter humiliation because he could buy "no nice headstone." She remembered one warm spring Sunday when they had journeyed to the cheap, crowded cemetery and the way Charlie had stood speechless before the headstone Hargraves's money had bought. She remembered their riding home, with Charlie sobbing loosely and happily all the way—greatly to the amusement of two small girls who insufficiently covered their giggles with a pretended amusement over a soap advertisement.

She recalled Hargraves's urgings of Charlie to work and of her saying: "Gravy, yuh don't believe in that rubbish he talks about them pictures, do you?" And of his replying: "At first I didn't. I just thought work would help him to

feel better. But now Mae, honest, I'm beginning to believe there's *something* in it!"

She remembered Charlie's being laid off and after that of Hargraves once giving way to open despair. He had been gardening a good deal in the outside section of Chicago, working hard; but even at that they had been cruelly pinched for money. Mae knew he was hungry and after it had happened, he acknowledged it.

He had come in looking very white, with shadowed eyes and a damp, unhealthy-looking forehead.

"They said I could have a meal if I worked for it, and I did. I weeded a geranium bed; but I got dizzy while I was doing it, and fell over, and they said I was drunk and told me to move on. I told 'em I was damned near starved, and the she-devil that owned the place told me to move on or she'd 'call an officer.' *Call an officer!* I—"

He had stopped speaking suddenly and stared straight ahead. Mae had not spoken but moved about the stove.

After a few moments she gave him a cup of coffee and some butterless bread. She looked hopefully in the molasses can, but it was empty. She stood looking and then poured in a little hot water and shook it over the sides. The slightly colored water was poured on the bread. Hargraves looked at the food, then at Mae, and then fell to gloriously. After he'd finished he got up and put his hands on her shoulders and shook her gently. "That wasn't fair," he said. "I didn't mean to. There's nothing left, and you'll be hungry."

Then he had got a job in an art gallery and she had gone on a free afternoon and inspected him in all his regalia. He had liked that so much, she remembered, for he had liked the sort of people who looked at pictures and their talk; but it had not paid well.

Then one night—her clothes had seemed incredibly shabby and he had not seemed to know that she was even alive—for days. And she was tired of doing the washing for two men and tired of cooking with nothing to cook. And she had seen a beautiful bangle bracelet on a woman while

she waited for a quarter of a pound of dried beef, a bracelet she'd like to own. And, God, hadn't she sweated and slaved until she was almost an old woman, and what to show for it? Dried beef cost a cent more! She went back up the long rickety stairs worrying over the added cent and full of resentment.

Hargraves, who was digging with a paving gang, had come in, slumped down in a chair, and supperless had fallen asleep. She looked at the food waiting on the stove. She looked at her stained skirt, at her work-roughened hands, and then sobbed; took her rain-spattered hat and putting it on and a too-thin coat, she went out.

A mud-streaked boy in overalls found her at twelve o'clock. He was very stern and he kept a tight hand on her arm. They went back to the Brainard flat without words. Inside, he closed the door, lit the lamp and lowered the wick, said: "Well?"

In answer she began to cry wildly and she told him how hard she had worked, what hell life was; how she hadn't a rag to wear; how tired she got of hearing Charlie sob—what the neighbors called her for housekeeping "that way" for two men; how she wished she was dead!

The boy wore clay-caked overalls—still looked down at the lamp; but his color had changed, he had grown exceedingly white.

"You have a right," he'd said slowly, "to do as you like. You do work too hard here, I know—I'm such a duffer, I can't seem to make more—but I brought you back because I don't think you're capable of making a decision now. You're too full of tears. You can't decide what you want to make of your soul when you're crying, any more than when you're laughing. You don't hear it unless you're real quiet. Do you want to go back to—the old life because of bangle bracelets?"

"N-no," said Mae.

Hargraves sat down and she had slipped down on the floor at his feet. She leaned her hot face against his knee and he patted her hair. "You get a job somewhere and we'll all cook and all wash," said Hargraves. "We've been brutes. You can get a room

in this building with some one else, if you care what they say."

Mae shook her head vehemently. She reached up and found his other hand and held it closely. "It was just the way I felt and—and the d-dried beef," she whispered. "And I do like pretty clothes, but—but I'm happy!"

"You're all right," said Hargraves gruffly.

"I won't, never again," she whispered. "I won't never—honest!" Then for a moment she had held his hand against her tear-wet cheek and then she had heard him say:

"Gee, it's almost one. Go to bed! You'll be dead to-morrow, and I guess I won't feel much like getting out at five. Good night, Mae."

She followed him to his door and clutched his arm. "Gravy," she whispered, "you won't think hard of me? You won't?"

"Mae," he began, as he tried to express what he felt in admiration for her undereducated, overemotional, poor little person; but he found no mode for showing it, so he ended simply: "Gee, no!"

Mae had gone in her room to pray energetically and to cry herself to sleep while Hargraves felt all his tired muscles ache as he lay awake wondering where and how he could make just a little more money.

The following week he gave her five dollars. "Get yourself some clothes," he said, while he looked anywhere but at her. Mae, unable to speak, had shaken her head. "Go on!" he said, and closed her hand about the bill, and then Mae wept in the age-mellowed roller towel, while Hargraves looked still more uncomfortable. Mae, darning stockings by the kitchen table, smiled as she thought of the end of that scene which came through a sizzle from the direction of the stove and a hot sugar smell.

"Oh, Gravy," she'd whimpered, "I don't want to take it from yuh! You need it worse than me. Oh, Gawd, there goes the prunes!"

And the pictures progressed in spite of handicaps, and just now the small group were saving every spare cent, for they were

some day going somewhere where the sun shone most of the time and they were going to make screen plays, and Mae was going to be the leading lady.

They talked of it often. "You 'n' me's the cumpney," Charlie would say with a look toward Hargraves; "and when it comes, it 'll come big."

Memories and recollections ceased with a rap on the door. Hargraves yawned, laid down "Huckleberry Finn," and went to open it. Two impressive-looking gentlemen stood outside.

"We are looking for Mr. Theodore Hargraves Brady," said one.

"That's me," said Hargraves. Then he colored as he thought of grammar, and asked them in an embarrassed way to come in. One of the gentlemen surveyed Mae and spoke of a word in private. Mae arose, gathered up her darning, and departed.

The gentlemen talked. Once or twice Hargraves swallowed audibly. After an hour they left. Hargraves stood leaning against the door for a moment after their departure and he ran a hand across his brow with a bewildered motion. Then Mae entered, followed by Charlie.

"What 'd the Vanderbilts want?" asked Mae.

Hargraves answered in a voice which shook.

"You can put up a monument for Elsie," said Hargraves to Charlie, "a good one! And to-morrow you and Mae can go buy some decent clothes, and we're going to California and make pictures and have enough to eat, too! Honest, we are!"

CHAPTER XXI.

NEWS.

TIME'S fingers touch so differently the different. Gentle wrinkles, good-natured ones and those of fretfulness, he etches; but, like fortune, time allows the sign-post man points out, and marks the chosen road distinctly as he travels it.

Because of this the face of the younger Milton girl was sweet to look upon, al-

though it held a wistful hint and sometimes an ache was mirrored in her eyes. Also because of this the wife of Franklin Milton had become a slinking little shadow of fear, wearing what people called the acknowledgment of guilt on her face, for she had been beaten.

Just now she sat with her two daughters in the room which had once been a nursery. "I thought," she said, with an apprehensive look toward the door, "I thought Mrs. Van Dorn spoke to me yesterday when we were out. I was almost sure she did, and smiled. Did you see, Julia?"

Julia opened her mouth to say that Mrs. Van Dorn had spoken across their carriage to some one on the opposite side of the street; but Frances broke in quickly: "I'm sure she did," she answered, "I saw her. You have lots of friends, dearest, only you're too modest to see it!"

"I *thought* she did!" said Mrs. Milton, happily. "I thought she did!"

Down-stairs in an old-fashioned, high-ceilinged conservatory porch sat a clergyman and a yellow-skinned man. The man looked unnecessarily old because he had been unnecessarily sick. He had, for years, indulged his worst side in all ways. Now when he screamed at his wife and daughters he was very dizzy and ill afterward; and he said the world was cruel while he fancied himself greatly wronged.

"We all have a cross," said the Presbyterian clergyman, who admired the father of Frances Milton.

"Yes," agreed Franklin Milton, "but my whole life—first my marriage—after it her—her going away—believe me, I have tried to forget and forgive, but it will come back; and then my daughters—influenced, they are—who do not understand nor believe in me. I am resigned to the will of my Heavenly Father, but I pray that He may gather me into His fold soon, and that there some little love awaits me!"

And the clergyman walked home wiping his eyes, and he told his wife, who was trying to run a six-cylinder establishment on a two-cylinder income, and who bent above discouraging accounts, that Mr. Milton was one of God's saints.

"Yes," she answered absently, "isn't he? Don't you suppose you'll have a wedding soon? Honestly, at the end of the month I don't know *how* to get along!"

Up-stairs in the Milton house the younger Milton was drawing pictures of long-billed birds on a window-pane.

"That window will have to be washed if you do that," said Julia quietly. Frances sighed, looked apologetically at the sister who never felt the faintest inclination to draw dinky birds, and then sat down on a low hassock before a feeble, small fire.

"If you'd embroider," said Julia, "you wouldn't be so restless."

"I can't get interested in it," answered the four and a half feet of pink and whiteness, who sat so undignifiedly curled up before the fire.

"You never tried."

"Yes, I did. Really, I did, Julia. I made one wing of a butterfly on a wash cloth and a 'T' on the beginning of a rag marked 'Tea Towel'; but it didn't thrill me."

Julia closed her lips. She adored her small sister, but she was bitterly disappointed in her failure to grow up. "Your use the word 'thrill'—" she began, but Frances, who had reached for the morning's paper, interrupted.

"Theodore Hargraves Bradly!" she said, as she studied the *Morning Age*. "Why, that was the name of Delia's little boy, wasn't it, Julia? He was such a *nice* little boy. I remember him so well. It was, wasn't it, Julia?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Man left fortune by road knight," read Frances. "Here, see, on the back page.

"CHICAGO, June 10—Theodore Hargraves Bradly, a barge loader, who lives in the Reimensmuggler Tenements, is named heir in the will of Pete Wingle, who, as a road knight, is notorious from coast to coast. Bradly is sole inheritor, and comes into the income from two hundred thousand invested in California lumber land and stocks.

"Many will remember various enterprises of Pete Wingle's in Chicago, among which are his East Indian fake and phrenology parlor. He was also a crystal-gazer and promoter. The bulk of Pete Wingle's money was inherited from his father, a miner in the first

days of mines. Pete, of many aliases, preferred the life of chance to safety, and in one phase of his career was associated with Bradly, who at that time also traveled with a tomato-can for baggage.

"No mention of Wingle's wife was in the will, although it is believed that he was married."

Frances laid down the sheet of paper which smelled so loudly of black ink.

"Think of it!" she said. "Julia, *think* of it!"

Julia sighed. "I am," she said, "and it's criminal! Why should he have that money? Why should he when we—we live in this—this—" Julia stopped.

"Hell," supplied Frances.

"Yes," admitted Julia, "when we live this way for the lack of a few dollars. He won't know what to do with it. He'll probably dissipate in the worst way, and buy Indian head busts, and bathe in champagne, and—"

There was a noise in the hall, and Julia stopped speaking. The door was open, and she looked toward it apprehensively and then leaned over her work. Frances reached for the paper and read furiously.

A tap of a cane came to them and shuffling steps. A mutter, and then the well-known "There, there, sir," with which an attendant soothed perhaps seventy-five times a day. There was a stop and querulous complaint, and the answer of the young attendant floated through the air: "There, there, sir," he said, "there, there, sir, you'll make yourself ill, sir, if you get so excited!"

Suddenly the noise of a flung cane which rattled on the bare floor and then rolled, the smart shut of a door, and then, quiet.

"Do you suppose he'll go down again after his nap?" asked Julia, in an undertone.

"Don't know," answered Frances. She dropped the paper and looked up, an alert look replacing the tired one she'd worn.

"I have news," she said, "real news. Julia, Philip Carpenter is coming to visit Aunt Letty and Aunt Agnes." Julia laid down her embroidery and breathed a little quickly.

"You've met him, haven't you?" questioned Frances.

"Yes, dear."

"I never have, you know. On the rare occasions when he's honored the town, I've been away. I'm ever so excited about meeting him. Is he a prig, Julia?"

Julia moistened her lips. After a moment she answered: "I don't think so." Her nervousness was apparent.

"I thought perhaps he was," said Frances, "because of the way auntie talks of him; a man who is an authority on dragon's blood vases, doesn't seem very rugged, does he?—and scarabs, you know, and Egyptian stuff. But he won't be critical of us, and that will be fine, won't it?"

"Yes."

"Julia."

"Yes?"

"Do you think my crape de Chine is too short?"

"No, dear."

Frances vanished into the next bedroom and from it came small fragments of song, the noises of a brush laid on a bureau-top, a dropped shoe. Julia laid down her embroidery and stared straight ahead into the long glass which stood opposite. She saw a girl who faintly resembled small Frances Milton, a more tall and harshly-lined, less beautiful girl, but a pretty one. The girl was cutting roses in the Milton garden and throwing them toward a basket, which stood on the ground near her. She sang a little, but suddenly she stopped and looked up. A young man stood looking at her, and they both smiled.

"You must be Mr. Philip Carpenter," said the girl.

"And you, Miss Julia Milton," answered the man.

Then they had both stepped nearer the new and small dividing hedge and above it had shaken hands. The roses faded, she saw September's swirling leaves. Again she stood by the hedge. It was dusk, and the man by her suddenly drew a sharp breath and whispered: "Julia, I love you."

Then she saw Franklin Milton's sneer, the picture faded, and she covered her eyes.

"Julia," called Frances from the adjoining room, "I'm going to tea at the Sal-

berry's to-morrow at four. Not the usual walk-in-the-side-door affair, but a real party for Philip, you see." There was a lull and the noise of running water. "How I hate tooth-brushes that moult!" complained Frances. "They didn't ask you to his tea, Julia, but just me. I hope you feel squelched."

There was a silence.

"Do you?" asked Frances.

Julia drew a long breath, smiling in a rather strange way, and answered: "Of course I am *deeply* hurt!"

After a silent moment Frances came in. She settled on the little hassock by Julia's feet and rubbed a cheek against her sister's knee.

"I've often thought," said Frances, "that with this discipline from the town, this loudly shown disapproval, we've been unhappy, but we've been happy, too. Think how well we know each other, how tight we are." She moved even closer to her much older sister. "But I *wish* I could make mother and you happy! I'm *sure* we've had all the discipline we deserve! I'd do *anything* to make you happy! *Anything*!" Julia laid down her embroidery.

"If you're happy," I'm happy," said Julia, in a low voice.

After a close moment, Frances spoke, airily and on another topic. That is the way youth skirts that which touches the inner shrines.

"So I'm to go to tea to-morrow," she said, "to meet Philip, the adored; and *you* aren't asked!" I am young and beautiful!" That was an old joke and one at which Julia always laughed; but to-day she did not. Instead she sewed fast and unsteadily.

Frances looked up with inquiry. She wondered if she had dismissed Julia's remarks about happiness too abruptly. It was characteristic of her that she never worried over her own feelings being hurt, but worried and thought often if she imagined any one else's were troubled.

"You were so dear to say that about my being happy!" she said. "I never *knew* any one so unselfish as you are, Julia darling! I *do* love you so!"

An hour later Frances was clipping roses

in the Milton garden. Some of them hung high and made her stretch her pretty arms to get them. After she did she clipped their thorns and tossed them into a basket which stood near her on the ground.

Suddenly she became aware of eyes, and looked toward a hedge which divided the Milton and Salberry grounds. She saw a man standing there, and first she smiled and then he.

"You are Mr. Philip Carpenter!" she said.

"And you, Miss Frances Milton," he answered.

Then they both stepped nearer the tall hedge and reaching across it shook hands. As the man took Frances Milton's he felt something new, and at the same time his natural suavity deserted him.

"I'm coming to tea with you to-morrow," said the girl. Her face changed. "Oh, dear!" she went on with a tiny irritability in her voice, "Aunt Letty and Agnes have been planning for months to introduce us. They want to see me be impressed. You know they worship you, Mr. Carpenter. Oh, dear! I'm so sorry to disappoint them!" She snipped a piece of boxwood and then looked up.

"I guess they haven't seen us," she said. "Couldn't we meet each other again? Just pretend we haven't met?"

He nodded, cleared his throat and spoke.

"It shall be, of course, just as you wish, Miss Milton," he answered. He thought her wish rather childish, and he also thought he had never seen so beautiful a girl. He could not for the life of him help staring. He was grateful that she didn't seem conscious of it.

"Then good-by, Mr. Carpenter," she said, smiling up at him. "Remember, to-morrow I've never seen you!"

She turned, and taking her basket went toward the house, and the gentleman of unimpeachable manner, the man who believed in the old régime of courtliness, stood like the most wooden of cigar store effigies, staring after her.

At the porch she looked back and waved at him, whereupon he grew very red, and hurried toward the house of his aunts, calling himself a fool and wondering why he

felt as if he had stood on that spot before, holding her hand. It clung, that feeling, and his wonder grew.

Frances hurried up the stairs and found Julia still sitting on the window seat of the play room and still embroidering. "I've met him," she said breathlessly, "and he seems ever so nice. Julia, don't you think I might go, walking before I go there for tea to-morrow? I'd like to wear my pink-lined hat. I can't *help* feeling that I look a *little* nice in it! And if I walked first, it would look reasonable—my wearing it!"

Julia nodded and then she rubbed her hand across her forehead.

"What's the matter, Julia?" asked Frances softly, instantly forgetful of a man named Carpenter.

"A bit of a headache," answered Julia. "I suppose I've used my eyes too long."

After she heard the staccato tap of Frances's heels on the last step of the front stair she got up and laid aside her embroidery. She went to the door, closed it, and stood before an oak-framed pier-glass. By her was the phantom of her lovely little sister. She felt the contrast and was old and worn; and something inside her she had long thought incapable of more pain began to hurt—hurt cruelly. She saw and magnified her flat chest, her angular shoulders, her hair—tired, drab hair, which was streaked with gray. And her face, in its unhappy mood, was most unbeautiful.

"I'm old and ugly," she whispered to the dejected reflection, and for a moment hid her face; and then she wiped her eyes on a bit of linen on which she was embroidering butterflies of cast-iron grace. "And I'm a fool!" she added bitterly. And again she looked into the mirror and saw the face of Philip Carpenter.

CHAPTER XXII.

TEA WITH LEMON.

THE next afternoon at four thirty, Frances Mary Milton walked up the path that led to the Misses Salberry's front door and there lifted a heavy knocker. As

she waited, she tilted a pink-lined hat more daringly and adjusted a string of corals. Then the door opened and she went in.

Behind the rheumatic maid, who had opened that same door for fifty years, appeared Miss Agnes, wearing a delightful Victorian hospitality, that which is a little heavy, echoes an "You're-not-eating-a-thing!" atmosphere, and smells of pound cake.

"Will you lay aside your hat, dear?" she said, after the greeting.

"I don't believe so, Aunt Agnes," said the adopted niece. She caught a glimpse of the hat and herself beneath it in a mahogany-framed mirror, and tilted the pink-lined one even more daringly.

"Won't it be heavy, dear?" asked the old lady.

"Oh, *no!*" said Frances, "I never feel it!" And then, with an arm about the elder woman's waist, she entered the dim, faded, yellow drawing-room that smelled of lavender and musty memories. Miss Letitia was there, sitting behind a pie-crust tea table and sitting very erect, as she had been taught was proper in her youth.

Orlando was there, the cat that had had some forty kittens in her years on earth. Last, but not in the least, Philip Carpenter was there. He rose as the ladies entered, and bent above Frances's hand. She looked at him clear-eyed and inquiring, as she always did at those whom she met. It had become a habit, through her wish to probe, and to find whether they were critical or the rare and wonderful gentlefolk who tried to believe the best of every one.

"I am so glad to meet you," she said and, as she said it, looked a little impish. He smiled down at her, decided that her hat was too far tilted for good taste, and then suddenly forgot matters of propriety. And, back of the young people, the Misses Salberry exchanged beautiful looks of hope.

"We're sort of cousins," said Frances to Philip Carpenter. "You've adopted me, haven't you, dears?" she ended, appealing to the two watching old ladies. They nodded, and smiled. Miss Agnes nodded for some moments, after nodding ceased to be necessary. The years had softened her until harsh stoppings would not respond.

She sometimes found herself waving a fan, after the fan had been laid aside; or nodding, after the need of a nod had quite passed. It was the little finger of world-tiredness which had laid itself on her gentle old spirit; and the tiredness was as pretty as a thin-stemmed rose waving in the wind.

Frances looked on her and smiled.

"Don't you look beautiful!" she said. "All fixed up for your niece, nephew, and a tea party!" The old ladies preened and said they weren't fixed at all; but Miss Letitia rearranged a real lace frill at her throat which needed no rearranging at all.

Philip Carpenter looked at Frances and smiled from pure enjoyment. He had made his first acquaintance with a living Dresden lady from a painted plate. In her pink and whiteness she was that. And added was much expression, with eyes of melancholy trend which turned down at the outer corners, beautiful eyes, beautifully placed. No wonder his aunts had talked of their small neighbor until his nerves had jarred from others' enthusiasms, too-forced on him. Frances, he saw to make a little face, and then, still looking at his aunts, slip down to a foot-stool which was beaded artistically with a dog, lying on roses.

"I have sat here since I was so high," she said to him, holding out a hand a foot from the floor; "and I can't be proper even at a tea party and sit where I should, upright on a stiff chair. You'll excuse me?"

He smiled, and murmured something apt.

"I hear you know lots about scarabs, and can read those things that are written on their tummies. I think it's quite wonderful of you!"

"Not at all, he said, and laughed down at her. "It is very simple if one becomes interested in it. I picked up something the other day, little shop back of the Metropolitan. The fellow had an Englishman's collection, and this was set in a scarf pin—very good example, by the way—" He reached in a pocket, brought forth a small disk which he handed to his aunts, with the information that it was the eye of Horus.

"It seems rather small," objected Miss Letitia. "Do you mean it was used in

those days as a substitute for an eye-glass, Philip?"

No, he did not mean that, he explained, while Frances inspected the tiny object.

"I think it's cute," she pronounced. "That little figure on it looks like a minnow. Doesn't it?"

Philip Carpenter was rather careful of his English. He especially deplored the use of the word "cute"; but to-day he heard it without a shudder. He even looked on its utterer, and smiled.

"If you are at all interested," he said, "I should be most happy to show you a few bits I have here with me—a mummy label, some scarabs, and a bracelet. That, by the way, is the finest thing I have. It is of no great value, my small collection, but it gives me pleasure."

"I'd love it," said Frances. "When will you show it to me?"

"To-morrow morning, some time. Would that suit?" he said. "The small carvings are indistinct, and the morning light is, I think, best."

Frances nodded, and the talk turned other ways. After a half hour more she got up to go. She kissed both the ladies, and Philip Carpenter, for the first time in thirty-eight years, speculated on the qualities of a kiss. Heretofore the subject had been swallowed in scarabs, and hieroglyphics; he didn't quite know why he thought upon it now.

Miss Agnes rustled back in the room.

"Philip, does she please you?" she asked tremulously. Had he been less absorbed, her manner would have baffled him; but he was brazenly watching Frances Milton trip across the lawn, and he did not notice his aunt's breathless suspense.

"I think her quite charming," he said, "quite charming. She is almost too pretty for good taste, but what a fascinating transgression! I enjoyed watching her. She uses her hands naturally and well, does she not? Let me put a cushion behind you, aunt. Would you like me to read to you?"

Aunt refused his offer to read with fluttering politeness, and they sat together, silent, looking at a small fire which fluttered too, as if it felt the spirit of its little lady

owners. Miss Letitia watched her nephew, who seemed entirely absorbed. She nodded, and nodded until at last she went nodding to sleep.

Philip looked down at a beaded footstool, and as he looked he saw a shadow, who thought his eye of Horus cute. He smiled where heretofore he had always shuddered.

Frances had gone home that afternoon to be assailed with the atmosphere of the house—shell, it had grown to be, for magnificent unhappiness. There were reminders in almost every room of things which Frances would forget.

In the hall was a broken andiron and, when Frances saw this, she saw a little close-haired dog, lying whimpering, while her white coat grew streaked with red.

In the drawing-room, coldly furnished in that most terrible of periods—walnut striped with gold—in there, was always the sound of her father's voice; confiding in attitude rather than words, confiding always only just so much—enough to give the meanest of impressions—that voice, and the listener's hum of sympathy.

In the dining-room sat guests about the board; shadow guests, always there, that had come to Franklin Milton's table, and there had shown their disapproval of his erring wife and daughters.

Up-stairs, in a long hall, she had been half frightened out of her small senses, as a child, by hearing a woman's wild sobbing; sometimes her strident entreaties, and then the voice she hated at that indiscriminating time, speaking harshly.

In the room that had been her nursery, she saw Carlotta torn from her.

In Julia's she stood a child, and saw her older, very pretty sister, rush in the room, sink sobbing to the bed, and there gasp broken sentences, and a man's name. "He has sent him away," she had sobbed, "sent him away. I'll never see him again."

The only room in the house that Frances did not hate was her own small sanctum, an unused one on the first floor, which she had begged for. It had been a breakfast room and opened from the dining-room. Her piano stood there, her best loved books

were there, her most treasured prints, and she kept it locked.

This day, she felt with peculiar sharpness the cold, cruel atmosphere of the house, because she had come from the one which was so filled with peace. It, the one she left, seemed a beautiful harbor, and its inmates light-house keepers. The man she had met seemed a saint, as she faced her father, sitting in a wheel chair by the library window.

She spoke and he grunted an answer, looking on her with a sneer.

"I'm going to make a will," he said after a moment of silence. His voice threatened: "Don't think that when I die—" He broke off abruptly.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Next door. I had tea there."

He studied her with lowered head, his glance sifting through shaggy brows. She wondered uncomfortably what he was thinking of. She hoped he would not forbid her going there, as he had often threatened. She suddenly realized the warmth that she would miss, and that she did occasionally very much need the touch of little humans.

"You go there a great deal," she heard.

"Yes," she stammered, "I—I do, sometimes. I—"

However the attention of the sick man was diverted, for his wife had entered.

"Why do you follow me?" he stormed. "Do you wish to taunt me with my life's mistake? Do you think for a moment I forget it? You, sickly children—girls—God! I—"

"There, there, sir!" said the attendant, coming in. "You'll make yourself ill, sir. You will, sir."

Franklin Milton sagged back limply, and Frances followed her shaking mother. The attendant watched her go and his eyes put a halo on her shining head.

"I didn't know he was there," said Mrs. Milton. "He—he sent me word that he did not want to encounter me. He—"

"Oh, dearest!" said Frances, "why do we take him so seriously? Every one thinks the worst now, and we're alive! And there is nothing more that he can do." But as she spoke an echo-picture recurred.

"I'm going to make a will," she heard, and saw a man frowning at her through shaggy brows.

The morning after the tea party, Philip Carpenter kept his aunts waiting for their breakfast for the first time in his life. The little god with wings made him have a great deal of trouble deciding what sort of a shirt to put on.

When he waited upon himself, which was rarely, it was planned and thought-out operation with not a moment wasted. Philip was very methodical as well as neat. He did not bring his man to Morkley for two reasons. First, because his aunts' ménage was a simple one, and not built for the putting up of guests' servants; secondly, because a personal servant would be a curiosity in Morkley, and one never constituted oneself a rival for Barnum & Bailey—it was not a "nice" thing to do. That belonged to hair-oiled gentlemen who bragged of valets.

The morning after the tea party, he missed his régime and was, for the first time in his aunts' house, late for breakfast. He could not decide what sort of a tie to wear! He thought of Frances, and took out eight, laying them in a row on a high old Hepplewhite bureau. Then he brought the honored shirt, and tried it in comparison. He selected a tie, put it on, tied it. The knot was *too* neat.

He thought of his Dresden neighbor, and with a frenzied look at the fast-moving clock hands tore it off to replace it with another. He was quite shaking when he descended the white-spindled, mahogany-hand-rail trimmed stair, and saw his aunts waiting primly for him.

"I beg your pardon, I do most earnestly!" he said. "I fear I am late!"

"Oh, no!" said Letitia, and stared down at her old, blue-figured cup, kindly—the clock was just opposite her. Miss Agnes echoed Miss Letitia's no, and shook her head a great many times.

For Philip, the morning dragged until eleven, when the young neighbor came tripping across the lawn and jumped over a low spot in the dividing hedge. She inspected a few things Mr. Carpenter brought

with him, and she inspected him. She liked him; he was very gentle, she thought, and kind. Her world-placing had made her realize the value of kindness.

After she left, Philip Carpenter made two decisions. The first one he confided to his aunts.

"You have always asked me to make you a visit of some length," he said. "May I make it now? I'll send to New York for more things, if I may."

The ladies looked at each other and almost winked. They said they had always desired their dear nephew to spend a summer with them, which he well knew. And they fluttered a great deal, for they were very happy.

The other decision was—his plan to ask the younger Milton girl to marry him. For he was in his own, nice, and methodical way, very much in love. He began to recall the better flower shops he knew—their locations. He would telegraph orders. He wondered whether there were any one else courting her? He almost frowned over this possibility, but recalled in time that irritation was a wasting emotion, and did nothing for one's betterment.

"I saw his scarabs," said Frances, who came upon Julia, weeding in the garden. "I suppose they are interesting to any one who knows anything. Julia, how *can* you touch those bald caterpillars! He read me some inscriptions, too, but they mainly dealt with the deceased—'son of,' you know, and so on. I don't see how he can get so excited over them. I wonder if those poppies I planted are ever going to come up?"

Julia got up stiffly, folded some earth-stiff gloves, and spoke.

"Did you—like him?" she asked.

"Yes, in a way," said Frances slowly, "but just one way. I think he's kind. Of course that's a lot, too. But yesterday he said: 'Lemon, aunt, and no sugar, please,' and it seemed to me that explains him. I don't know whether you'll understand, but the restraint—he only ate one sandwich, too, and I had six."

"I really think that was too many."

"But, Julia, I liked them. And then

collecting scarabs! I think that is a *disgusting* habit for a real man! And studying out that stuff written on their tummies! I'd rather have him holler himself hoarse at a ball game."

"Holler!" echoed Julia, in a horrified tone.

"Yes, holler! Instead of—" Frances stooped, picked up a trowel and inspected it with a near-sighted, thick-lensed closeness. When she spoke her voice held the quality of Philip Carpenter's and her words were closed clipped, carefully placed, and nicely enunciated.

"You will note the inscription on this bit," she said, "the head of the Assyrian God Oh-Whack is plainly seen to superimpose that of Gum-Dube, which shows to the observer that red flannels were donned by order of King Ptolemy I—or XVII—in the first day of the feast rather than the last. Ah!"

Julia was walking away from the small actress and toward the kitchen door, Frances ran after her. "Julia," she called, "Julia!"

But Julia did not stop.

She caught Julia's arm as she was on the first step on the porch. Julia was crying, Frances changed color. Oh, Julia!" she whispered, "*what* have I done?" Julia did not, could not answer. She turned and went with Frances to sit on a white bench beneath the old pine tree.

"*What* have I done?" repeated a white and miserable-faced small maiden. "Julia, dear! Oh, don't, Julia, *dear!*"

Julia shook her head, blew her nose, laughed unsteadily, and spoke.

"I've—I've had a headache for two days," she began. "I—I guess I'm bilious. There's the grocer's boy looking at us and he saw me!"

"No, he didn't, dear, really he didn't!" replied Frances.

Whereupon she slipped a timid, but very loving arm about the partially recovered Julia.

"I felt badly and then—when I see you not at all appreciate a man like—like Mr. Carpenter and—and hear you talk slang. Your English is *frightful*—and make those remarks about scarabs when you know a

man of any niceness of taste would naturally prefer a scarab to a ball game."

"I suppose so," said Frances, but her look and tone were dubious.

"Then I was over to aunties' this morning and they—they said Philip was much attracted to you." Julia stopped and began to sob again.

"Stuff!" said Frances, "he's only in love with antiques. I may be getting there, but I don't have to be restored just yet—and if he did think me nice, I'd never leave you, dear!"

"That's—just—it. You m-must! This horrible house, and father—promise me you will! No one knows what a good man Philip Carpenter is. He would be wonderful for you—he would—" but again Julia was silenced by her tears.

"Well, all I can say," said Frances, who looked on her weeping sister with much concern, and—since the Philip advice—some irritation, "all I can say is that I hope you'll stop taking cream on your oatmeal. You had a quart on it this morning, and I hope you'll get a tonic. Let me see your tongue."

Julia stuck it out.

"It doesn't look wrong," said Frances. There was a slight sound, and then on the path came the wheel chair of Franklin Milton. He was pushed toward the young women, and opposite them smiled. He smiled especially on Julia, who in spite of reddened eyes and a puffed nose was trying to achieve a dignity. The attendant, after one look stared ahead, sorry for the one, but glad the tears were not the other's. But there was no sorrow in the heart of the man who looked back smiling.

That night, Frances wondered, as she undressed. For after lunch that day her father had told her, and in his most pleasant fashion, that he had not the slightest objection to her going to the next-door house. He spoke of his old threats as "jokes." She had—surely understood them!"

She wondered, but she did not connect Julia's reddened eyes and her father's memories; nor his measure of her admiration of a man and—the safety in making her one of the stretchers of Julia's rack.

"I wonder what it is?" she thought. "I can't see what—I wonder!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANXIETIES.

A TWO-FOOT snow was fading miserably with a premature thaw. Women held clothes high and minced across brown-slushed crossings; while men slipped and swore; and, those who had been uppish when their wives suggested overshoes, wished they had been a little more gentle. It was well, they reflected, to please the ladies *occasionally!*

Frances Mary Milton stood in a drug-store waiting for a prescription which was being filled by the druggist's partner behind a slight partition. She was staring at a violently red flagon which hung in the window. The druggist dove below the counter, brought out a box of anemic tooth brushes, and refilled a tray.

"How's your maw?" he asked suddenly. He did not look up as he put the question. He rather hated to have even the pretty young Milton think he cared how her mother was, but he knew that a number of his customers, who wanted news with each purchase, would expect that question answered.

"She—she isn't any better."

"Double pneumonia, ain't it? Here's Oscar with your medicine. Double, ain't it?"

"Yes. How much is that, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Eighty cents. How do you reckon she took it?"

"I really can't say. It was, eighty, was it not?"

"Yessum. Run a good fever, I guess?"

But the druggist wasn't answered, for Miss Milton had left the shop and the bell which was attached to the door still tinkled in echo of her energetic exit.

"Highly-tighty!" said the druggist vigorously, and went on arranging tooth brushes, his mouth moving with the things he would say of Miss Frances Milton's manner and her mother's deserved sickness. A boy entered.

"Kin I have a blue glass bottle?" he

asked in the uncertain made-and-female voice of fourteen.

Frances hurried around the corner. Her heart throbbed resentment. She hated the people who asked how her mother was. Hated them! They didn't care. It was just the little gabble over any new happening. She realized with unpleasant sureness what they were saying. "I hate them!" she whispered. Then she drew a long and quivering breath and felt something smart beneath her eyelids.

She recalled her visit to her mother that morning. Her mother had been talking very loudly, and very fast, between incredibly short breathings. "Perhaps if I had been cleverer and pretty. Then—perhaps—I never saw that doctor again. I am sure Franklin really understood it, but somehow people thought. Another girl. It is not—not the pain—Franklin, *please*, Franklin! Oh, God, *why*—"

The younger Frances wished she could hurt the sick man who lived in a wheel chair—really *hurt* him. She found herself crying, and fumbled for a handkerchief. Suddenly she set her teeth as she resolved that she "mustn't," for it would "worry Julia."

There was a wagon in front of the Salberry house. A trunk was being taken from it and up the walk. She saw the initials on the trunk's end and "New York."

"Philip!" she thought dismally. "Why *couldn't* he stay away!"

In the hall, Julia waited for her with a lavender box, a beautiful box tied with silver and lavender-striped ribbon. "Philip," said Frances, after opening them. She tossed the card aside. It veered from the table, fell on the floor, and there lay neglected.

Frances opened her coat and took off her hat. "Any change?" she whispered. For days every one in that house, except Franklin Milton, had whispered. Julia shook her head. After Frances went slowly upstairs, Julia picked up a card which had fallen to the floor; and, taking a box of exceptionally beautiful orchids under her arm, she went to the butler's pantry. She

arranged them *lingeringly* and with some little care.

Annie, who since the days of sickness sniffed often, entered once to find her standing idle and looking down on the flowers that meant so little to the younger Milton.

"Was them fer her?" she asked.

"No, those are Miss Frances's."

"Oh! How *is* she?"

That night, Philip Carpenter dressed with unusual particularity; and he was ingrainedly particular. Frances had told him that he might come to see her for a little while, at eight. He wished he had "spoken to her" before *this* had occurred, for now it was obviously impossible. He had waited for a consistent length of time to elapse. It did not look "nice," he thought, for people to become engaged too suddenly.

He had met her in June—it was now January. He pondered on this as he inspected his tie. He had tied it *too* well, he reflected. He wished his aunts would place their mirrors with some due respect for lights. There, that was better!

He found himself quite ready and miserably idle at ten minutes before eight. Time didn't hang heavily, but came and sat as heavily on his spirit as though it had been a load of bricks. Once he looked at his watch and forgot to beg his aunts' pardon. He wanted to see her, wanted to see her as he had never before wanted anything. He resented Frances's giving to him that unrest. After an incredibly long interval, the clock in the hall boomed three and he knew it was eight and, with much relief, got up.

"I shall return to you shortly," he said to the maiden ladies; "my stay next door will necessarily be limited." And then he let himself out and went toward the Milton house.

A red-eyed maid admitted him and ushered him to a small room off of the dining-room. He had never been there before and he was surprised at the room. He had not thought the ugly Victorian shell capable of harboring such warmth.

He approved in his tempered way of the prints. Among them was Whistler's portrait of Carlyle, amazingly well framed.

The picture stayed in, did not leap forward, but was not in any way a second thought. There was a photograph of Amalfi and an Italian courtyard with all the dirt and charm of the eternal festa—even the pig, the two-wheeled cart, and the shrine beneath the eaves.

"What a charming bit," murmured Mr. Carpenter.

He turned to the table, which was bare—and bare tables were not being worn in that day—to see some books of interesting binding with interesting contents. Then he saw the book shelves, which were of tactful height and in appearance lowered the ceiling and made the room less a well.

"I see you've been inspecting my room," he heard from the doorway. "How are you, Mr. Carpenter?"

"And you?" he answered. "Yes, I have been guilty of looking about. Really a delightful, small place, you have. To be frank, I did not know that your tastes ran in these directions. But—how is your mother?"

Frances's eyes filled with tears. "She's awfully sick," she said unsteadily, "awfully!"

Philip Carpenter forgot resolves. He acted on impulse for perhaps the first time since he had thrown his milk bottle from his crib. "Don't cry, my dear," he whispered. "How I *wish* I could help you." He caught her hand after he had spoken and held it closely. "My dear!" he ended.

Frances looked startled. She tried, gently, to disengage her hand.

"You've been ever so kind to me," she said quickly. "I appreciate it lots. Those flowers were beautiful. I wanted you to see them, but I don't know where they are. I told Annie to bring them in here, but I guess she forgot."

Philip Carpenter was still looking down at the four-and-a-half-foot maiden, who was uncomfortably aware of a tightly held hand. His eyes were unusually human, and hungrily so.

"Do you know why I've been good to you?" he asked in a tense, short way.

Frances shifted her weight and looked wildly around. "Isn't it cold!" she said, but Philip paid no heed.

"Do you know why I have?"

Frances did know. The knowledge had been forced, and unpleasantly forced, on her consciousness; but, like all other women, confronted with the question she knew was to come, she shook her head.

"I am greatly attracted to you," said Philip. "Your nature I believe to be one of sweetness; your manner is intensely appealing, in short, *I admire you exceedingly*." Philip Carpenter stopped. The room he had found to grow extremely warm. He *had* to mop his forehead with a monogrammed handkerchief. Then something snapped, and his voice grew rough. For a moment he was an average man.

"I love you damnably," he said. "It—this thing—has upset me for all of the summer and fall and winter, and—and—" He stopped.

"Won't you sit down," said Frances, in a flustered way. Philip sat suddenly.

"Well?" he interrogated, after a silence of some duration.

"I'm sorry," said Frances, who stared at the fire.

"I don't see why you say that," he answered irritably. "You'll marry me. I've *decided* that."

"Have you?" she said, in a weak, little voice.

Philip Carpenter moved quickly. He felt unduly annoyed.

"As I was saying," said Philip, "I have been greatly attracted to you. Your manner, your sweet personality, in short, all of you. I have pondered, searched my soul, and pondering and searching have I found love!"

Frances looked very ill at ease.

"Really?" she answered after a moment in conversational tone. "Did you expect to find it? Do you feel it coming on, like *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde*, or does it appear suddenly, like a boil?"

Philip frowned. "I had hoped," he said sternly, "not to have to tell you how *it*, as you call it, feels. I had hoped—"

"That I was in love with you?" she ended for him, with the first laugh she had laughed for some days. "Why, really, Philip, I haven't thought of it. I suppose love is largely a quality of imagination, and

I haven't imagined about it at all. Perhaps if I did—"

"Will you?" he entreated softly, leaning toward her. He recaptured her hands, and clasping them between both of his, repeated: "Will you?"

Frances looked through the open doorway into the hideous dining-room. She thought of the spirit-hideousness of the whole house. She thought of Julia's wishes on this subject and of how much Julia would do for her if she were called to. Then she looked at Philip Carpenter's face, just now more earnest than she had ever seen it. She was a little touched, as any decent woman is by a man's love.

"I suppose I can try," she said, "only I don't know how it will be. Perhaps my technique will be very shaky. I haven't practised much at it! But I'll try!"

"My dear! My dear!" he whispered, and touched her small hand with his lips.

Just then there was a noise behind them and he dropped the small hand as if it were exceedingly warm, feeling, the moment after this act, extremely silly.

"Miss Frances," said a person, who suggested kitchens, and had a vague waistline, "Miss Frances, that there man has come again. He said yuh promised him five cents."

"Oh, yes," said Frances, "so I did. Excuse me, Mr. Carpenter." She vanished back of the kitcheny person, carrying her purse, which she picked up from the table. When she came back she explained.

"I give them money sometimes," she confessed, "and I don't advise them not to buy drinks, I just say: 'Go use this the way you want to, but if you *do* beg afterward, chew a clove.' You know the Morkleyites are very narrow-minded," she explained.

Philip's mood broke and he became again himself.

"Do you think those men are really benefited by making themselves into blotters for a poor brand of whisky?" he asked somewhat frigidly.

"Probably not," she replied weakly; "but it does seem to cheer them up. Just think of being made happy by one beer! It's pathetic! I feel that every one should

be glad to strew beers along their paths. It's a sort of rose. You know people are always talking about tossing roses along life's path. I skip, flinging beers!"

She was laughing, and Philip Carpenter smiled because she was so very pretty when she laughed; but he decided he would change that, with a few other things in her, after their marriage. He really felt he *must*.

Frances felt a disapproval in the atmosphere. "They bless me," she said, as if that proved her right. "Did you ever hear a tramp bless a woman who gave him advice and a copy of the *Christian Record*?" Mr. Carpenter had to admit that he had not.

Frances got up. Her expression had changed.

"I had forgotten," she whispered, "for those moments I had forgotten mother. I can't even consider what you spoke of now."

She held out her hand. He took it, and holding it, looking down at her so close to him, he thought he had never seen anything so sweet, any one so beautifully alive as she; hair a bit untidy and eyes shadowed by worry. Again he was human.

"You're so dear!" he whispered.

"I do respect you tremendously," she answered. "I wish you were my uncle!" He became violently irritated and aware of the years which lay between them—"Or brother," she went on, and again he loved her.

"I would be very good to you," he said. And she knew that, in as far as he gaged good, he spoke truly. After a word or so more he went, absently trying to cross the lawns. Then feeling intensely silly, he backed out of a drift and brushed his snow-covered trouser legs; and then, still rather absently, he went into the Misses Salberry's long paneled door, and finding they had gone to bed, sat in the drawing-room and dreamed over the dying fire.

That night Julia looked up from her accounts to see her small sister, now clad in a soft rose negligee which somewhat relieved her pallor. She curled up in a low chair, yawned with an obvious pretense, and then spoke.

"Julia," she said, "what is the essential ingredient of a happy marriage?"

"I don't know, dear." Julia's voice was stiffly level.

"Sameness of taste?"

"I should think that would be a good insurance," answered Julia. She was writing figures quickly, and all in the wrong column.

"Put that up," begged Frances, "and talk to me; I need your help."

Julia drew a long breath, laid aside her cash-account, and turned to the damagingly pretty girl in the low chair.

"Love," said Frances, "is that essential? Or is respect a better foundation? Is there anything like love, or is it imagined?" She plaited the edge of her negligee and spoke, her restlessness showing her embarrassment. "I've thought," she said, "that perhaps love is like the far north—known to be there by every one, seen or felt by few. And then—mother and father—she loved *him*. Wouldn't sympathy of taste be satisfactory?"

Julia again turned to her accounts. After a moment she spoke, still scanning her book, still writing. "Is it Philip?" she asked.

"Yes, and I don't know what to do. Perhaps I do love him. How is one to know? Is that the nurse, Julia? I thought I heard some one in the hall." Frances got up suddenly and went to the darkened doorway. She disappeared. When she re-entered she was smiling and her cheeks were flushed.

"She's sleeping," she whispered, "and Miss Thompson was quite human. She thinks she is honestly better. Oh, Julia! I'm so heavenly happy I'm afraid I'm going to cry!"

CHAPTER XXIV,

THE DREAM-GIRL.

THEODORE HARGRAVES BRADLY, sitting in the warm noon sun of a southern California town, was reading a scenario and smiling. They almost always gave him immense pleasure. This one had been directed to the company's star, Mae, and she had felt that it admirably suited

her temperament. She sat near him watching his face, as he skimmed through the affair.

Behind them was Mae's bungalow, and far away, against an olive-green hill, stood the studios, which were destined to grow even beyond Charlie's largest dreams.

"*Claude ties Gladys on the railroad track*," Hargraves read aloud, adding a speculative: "H-m!"

"You could cut that," said Mae, "but the public likes it. The most jaded guy will set on the edge of his chair till the hero comes along to cut the ropes."

"I don't care," said Hargraves. "Use it if you want to, but it's so *done*. What does Wilkins think of it?" Wilkins was the manager and producer.

"He says," replied Mae, "that the kind of people who are going now will like it because it ain't too *deep* for 'em. He says the women who scrub offices and do washes go most, and that they like rough stuff."

"Take it," said Hargraves, standing up. He smiled down at Mae, picked up his hat, made his *adieu*, and started off. "Women who scrub offices and do washes," echoed in his consciousness, and the old smell came back. It rose around him, bringing back a thousand memories and sights. Delia's roughened hands, and her rare, but wonderful tendernesses—the alley home and the smells and sounds of it. And his changed surroundings to-day in contrast! What a world! What a world!

He thought with pride of the wonderful success that the new venture was having; and, with another and a pardonable pride, of his really sane use of the sudden money. It had not gone into *terra cotta* Indian heads, nor champagne baths.

"It's been good," he thought, "mighty good. I ought to be a happy chap!" But his eyes clouded after the thought, for the smell of yellow soap brought hurts. It seemed to him that the Lord might have let him give Delia a few riotously happy, pink-silk, parlor-lamp days, a few at least; but he had never been able to do one thing for her! Her one good time had been a crowded excursion! He tried to imagine, but it was hard to take Delia out of calico and put her into silk.

She had been aware that she could not wear it. She had known herself and her son's capabilities, in spite of a limited understanding. That he could rise and think and speak like "the grand folks at the swell house where I worked at," was entirely possible; but that she could, no.

Had Delia heard of "heredity" and "environment" she would, in all probability, have thought them the names of sleeping-cars, or of romantic isles, but she believed, all unknowingly, in the first, though the second had more to do with Theodore Hargraves Bradley's making.

A mother who kept him away from other ragged little people of his alley and who made him, from loneliness, turn to the great and many lands of books; a mother who knew all too well the consequences of sin and who spoke loudly and often of good and bad; a home where he saw suffering, but from which he could peep at the people of brown-stone steps—these had given him his environment and an unusual understanding of the world and its people.

Now he lived and talked with the brown-stone steps' half, but he could understand, suffer, and laugh with another sort. The consciousness of his start made his nature a repressed one. The greatest shadow in his life had given him long and well-shaped hands and feet and a splendidly carried head; but Delia, it was, who put in his eyes the light of truth and into his soul the desire for good.

He thought of her now as he walked toward the beach. Her voice, rough and high, came to him across years and death. He sat in an alley home at a pine table eating soup; by him was a piece of cake, a half circle bitten from one side.

"Look what I brung yuh!" he heard. "That there Mrs. Spangler only et that much and the cook was going to throw

it out! Ain't that fierce? I says, 'You gimme it,' I says. I says, 'Ain't she got nice false teeth and all?' I says—"

The small boy had eaten and greatly enjoyed the cake. He had been very glad to have it. After he finished it he touched his mother's roughened, huge-veined hand and said: "Thank yuh, maw. That was awful good cake!"

She had always given to him, always—everything she had. Again her voice came. "Sorry you never had no right paw," it said. He stopped, feeling the old surge of resentment, the old hate of circumstance, fate, that threw one into the whirlpool of life with too great a burden for safety.

"If," he thought, "I could have given mother a few good times, saved her a little work, and if I could have spoken once to—to—Frances Milton as an equal, I could forgive—lots—" And then he forgot his unhealthy reverie and ran down the beach toward a pile of rocks that slipped softly into the sea. Out on these, cut off from land by the risen tide, was a girl. She stood, surveying the water. When he drew near she looked up and spoke.

"Isn't this too silly?" she said. "I was reading and—I forgot!" She held out a book, frowning at it. Theodore moistened suddenly dry lips and smiled at her.

"I'll come out and get you," he said.

"Oh, but you mustn't," she protested. "If you could send a boat—"

"Not deep enough," he answered, "and it's a great day for wading. I'll try not to sit down with you coming in."

"Then why shouldn't I—" she began, but he had already plunged in and was well toward her. When he at last stood by her on the rocks he felt as if he had a touch of sun. Things danced wildly, but through all the unsteadiness he saw her clearly, and he could not look away.

(To be continued NEXT WEEK.)

MUSIC IN THE HOME

SAIID Brown, "To stop the baby's yell,
Each night I ring the dinner-bell;
But even then no rest I know,
Because it makes the dog howl so!"

Eugene C. Dolson.



A Tight Corner

by Ro Vere Scott

ASTEP in the dark, a false one, no foothold, nothing. A terrorizing moment, one in which to claw the air, black as a pit, then the swift thud and, silence. John Druce was hurt, to what extent he could not guess. He lay in a heap.

It was but a few minutes earlier that he had made his way along Third Street, south of Market, that portion of San Francisco given to the cheapest and simplest fare, and yet he was forced to go unfed—he was down and out. Lean and hungry and chilled to the bone, he shivered as the fine rain cut like a knife; the glistening sidewalk was hard and cold as solid ice, and his lower extremities were numbed to the knees.

His mind bordered that stage when grit and sand, and all that makes a man, caves in, but he kept going automatically.

Destitution was so apparent that the passers-by in their mien betrayed themselves at one with the elements; but he did not solicit alms—there was a chance of something on the morrow. Shelter, a little warmth, his body craved; the night was nothing short of hell. He turned into Mission Street, making toward the Bay.

He went a block or two. It was hereabouts, twelve months before, that he had had a steady job. All the places were the same, but now cold, blank strangers. It was between New Montgomery and Second Streets; here was the very name of the old firm, Ernshaw & Saddler. He swung half 'round, slipped, and cannoned heavily against the door, it gave way to his weight.

He got on his feet and peered inside. There was a short lobby, and then the elevator; Ernshaw & Saddler occupied the fourth floor. Who could have left the main door unlocked? He stepped inside. What could be better than to huddle in a corner of the stairs?

With these thoughts, although none too clear, instead of taking the stairs, he simply followed the beaten track of the year before, and walked to the elevator.

The light that filtered meagerly in barely dispelled the gloom; the outer gate of the elevator was just discernible. He did not stop to question whether the elevator stood there—it was an automatic, that was sufficient, and as the company advertised, "fool-proof."

His cold, wet hand found its way into the catch, it gave to the pressure, and he slid the gate back. Unthinkingly, he stepped through to where the elevator should have been, only to tread on air—the elevator was not there. A vain attempt to claw the opposite wall, and he shot down, sixteen feet, to the hard cement below. No sound escaped him, he lay too hurt to move, the extent of his injuries he hardly dared contemplate. The darkness was impenetrable.

He stirred, dragging himself onto his knees. Hell! How they hurt! Using his hands against the wall, he rose in an arch, straightened himself with difficulty. The pain racked him. It was inconceivable that no bones were broken. His hands were grazed, the elbows of his coat ripped, and

one trouser leg was torn from the hip down. The skin was gone in places, he could feel the biting air on the exposed flesh.

"My God!" he breathed. "Marvelous it's not worse!"

Gritting his teeth and feeling his way, he brought up at the door opening into the basement. He got it to move, then, after dragging himself up the three or four feet, he managed to stand up straight.

He groped his way to the stairway leading above, and a moment later shut the gate of the elevator, and pressed the button, but without response. He then proceeded slowly and painfully up the stairway, reasoning that there was someone in the building, and the condition of the elevator demanded attention.

He neared the fourth floor and hung in a bend of the stairs, too sore and exhausted for the moment to go further. Laughter greeted him, hollow and mirthless; he crept up the few remaining steps and listened; a path of light crossed from Ernshaw & Saddler's entrance to the elevator. Again, the sepulchral notes and the words: "Hell! Who cares?"

The voice was familiar, he tip-toed along and peered through the crack in the door.

"Soused to the eyebrows! Ha, ha! It's a joke!"

The figure of the watcher, like a lean and hungry animal, straightened—his eye glued on the loose, heavily set figure of a man in a chair, with one leg thrown over its arm and in his left hand a glass of whisky, filled and spilling. On a desk at his elbow was a bottle and a revolver.

Laughter echoed again, interrupted as the liquor emptied itself.

The man lowered the glass only to drop it, the splintering fragments ringing through the silence that preceded his words:

"Who are you?" It was a harsh whisper.

"Druce—John Druce."

The drunkard's flesh had turned a sickly purple.

"Where the—how the blazes did you get here?" he stammered, his leg slipping off the arm of the chair, his hand groping over the desk.

"Up the stairs; the elevator won't work."

With a side glance the intoxicated man took in the top of the desk, his figure then sank perceptibly.

"Where is it—?" he asked. "My gun!"

"Safe!" Druce assured him, tapping his coat pocket.

"Give it to me!" There was a plaint in the voice.

The other shook his head.

"How dare you?" demanded the drunkard, attempting to achieve dignity.

"Guess I'd better get a line on the police, or call up your home, Mr. Saddler—" Druce advised.

"Preposterous—preposterous!" repeated Saddler, truly alarmed. "You're too impetuous—far too impetuous!" his mouth hanging with heavy jowls.

Druce simply shook his head.

"What the blazes 's your game, anyhow?" blurted Saddler thickly. "Money?"

The young fellow's eyes brightened. Money meant food and warmth—the heat of the room alone reminded him of comfort. He did not answer.

"You've seen my hand—what's your price?" There was a veiled sneer in the utterance.

The incongruity of the situation tickled Druce. What extremes! He himself, kicked by fate like a mangy dog and hanging to the threads of an existence, and Saddler well fixed, and bloated, eager to shuffle off. He had read the man aright; he was bent on suicide.

Druce's front underwent a change, his brows narrowed, his nostrils broadened, and his lips gave a nervous twitch. The drink-sodden Saddler tipped forward in anticipation.

"You fired me once," Druce exploded. "If you didn't," he corrected, "your partner did!"

The thought seemed to burn in his mind.

"Reckoned I swiped some fixtures—the damned crook! Didn't he short-change Rosatti from Man Mateo? And I told him of it! That's why he stuck the knife into me! Wasn't straight enough to can me without a damned lie! No!" he thundered. "I wouldn't take your dirty money to tip you into hell! Nor would I beg the smell of an oil rag from you!"

Saddler sat back as though struck; Druce's identity, as much as his words, was responsible. "John—Jack Druce!" he mumbled, hardly able to recognize the dilapidated figure.

Druce's head bobbed with a fierce assent.

"Yes," mumbled Saddler in drunken corroboration, over-riding his habitual reticence, "Ernshaw's by no means a clean potato—been in some queer deals back East, I believe. Slugged a man and beat it South." A moment's pause and he disclosed further: "He beat up a woman in this office last week!"

Druce pushed back his hat. "The rotter!" he gritted.

"I'm frightened of him!" Saddler admitted, with unfeigned simplicity. "I came in upon him," he explained. He wet his lips as he finished and drew his hand suddenly across his chest. "Heart trouble!" he mumbled. "Fungus on the heart!"

"Should cut it out!" Druce inferred, nodding to the bottle.

The elder man gripped his chair, a spasm passing over his face. "Bad—damned bad!" he breathed. "That's why I was going to finish it to-night!"

The young fellow shook his head in protest.

Saddler sank in his chair until his chin rested on his chest, his vest streaked with cigar ash, his linen soiled, and his hair a tangled mat. Slowly he raised his eyes until they rested on Druce's face, fear, absolute abandon possessing him. His mouth opened with a helpless leer.

"The drink's all gone. It'll wear off, and then another night of hell! Give me the gun quick!" he entreated. "It's my heart!"

Druce stared at the horrified face as he might at a dog in agony.

"I can't!" he managed.

"Good God, man! This is hell—a living death! Worse than a condemned criminal. He's strong, I am weak here, here!" he cried pressing his hand to his heart. "I eat and move with it hanging over me. I wake unrefreshed, with the thought that it will fall to-day—I am trapped! Trapped! Don't you understand?" he implored huskily.

John Druce stood riveted and dumb.

"Give it to me! For the love of God, do!" He leaned heavily forward, his face setting a dull red, his hands gripping the arms of the chair.

"You're fanciful—" urged the listener, "get outside some hot coffee! It's a life-saver."

"I don't want a renewal! Damn you!" he stormed, rising shakily. "Here's your price—if it's money you want!"

He dug his hand clumsily into his pocket and fished out gold and silver and sprinkled it on the desk in contempt.

"There—blast you! I'll double it if you'll shoot me! Yes, shoot—"

Druce stepped back as Saddler lurched forward, with difficulty maintaining his feet.

"Quick—quick! And beat it!" his words were becoming incoherent. Terror changed his eyes to a glassy stare, his neck was corded and his face purple. His hands rose and he gripped his throat. He staggered, spun half 'round then fell in a shapeless heap, his lips flecked with blood.

Druce, horrified, stepped to his side.

"I'm all in—" gurgled Saddler.

A convulsive movement, a burst of blood and he rolled limply onto his back. He was dead.

"Poor devil! And to think I envied you!" escaped from Druce as he regained his feet.

To his back was the money, he turned and occupied the seat at the desk, but reached for the telephone. His movements were arrested, there was footfalls on the stairs.

His face set ashen gray, his eyes shining like coal, he waited.

A moment later and a tall, lank man verging forty stood in the doorway, his steely eyes taking in the figure at the desk and the heap on the floor, his slit of a mouth tightening. His hand flew to his hip.

"Drop it!" the words came from Druce.

The man was Ernshaw. He had drawn his revolver in a twinkling, only to find himself covered.

Two shots rang out.

Ernshaw had fired from his hip, the bullet taking the neck off the bottle and

imbedding itself in the wood of the desk. He sank, rolling half into the room. Druce let his pistol fall and gaped. Not a sound but his own heavy breathing and the distant night, while a dark stain started across the floor from Ernshaw's left temple.

Druce sat glued to his chair, his eyes fixed unseeingly. Slowly a flush of excitement crept into his lean cheeks and he turned sharply to the telephone. He cleared his throat and tried his voice before removing the receiver, and then called up the Central Police Station.

"This is Saddler," he said in a strained voice, "Albert Saddler of Ernshaw & Saddler, of Mission Street—Yes! I shot my partner in self-defense—he pulled a gun on me, and I want you to send an officer—I'll stay right here!"

He waited for nothing more, his eyes roved over the money and his hand went nervously to his chin, but it was only in passing. He essayed to stand, only to sink with a smothered groan; his left knee joint seemed permanently hooked, and the pain at his hip was like a knife thrust. His hurts were setting cold. The police were coming; what explanation could he make if he were caught?

He got onto his feet and limped slowly to the door, stepped over the silent form of Ernshaw, crossed the passage and passed into the elevator, fearing that the descent could not be accomplished in time without it.

He shut himself in, touched the button, and a great fear stole over him—the cage did not move. He had left the basement door open. Cursing his misfortune he tried to get out only to find that the gate had ridden beyond its catch and jammed. He was assuredly trapped. Minutes seemed hours. He worked himself into a fever, his injuries for the time forgotten. He rattled and shook the trellised gate until he concluded that the very noise would betray him.

About to accept defeat, the gate adjusted itself and he stepped out.

Grunting and squirming, he made his way below hugging the wall like an old man, to pause anon with set lips and listen. He reached the second floor and heard foot-

falls, whether above or below he could not determine—they were light and stealthy.

With bated breath he retraced a couple of steps, withdrawing from the stairs and backing along the passage.

The distance was so short that, did any one come, detection seemed certain. Realizing this and having wasted precious moments, he dismissed the sounds as fancies and again made for the stairs. He had accomplished another flight when his fears were renewed; they were all too real this time. He backed, as previously, and crouched as far from the stairs as he could.

Two men were ascending, a light flashed now and then.

"Which floor, Jack?" The question echoed up the walls.

"Fourth—keep moving!"

John Druce hushed his breath as two figures, taller and more forbidding from his position, came into sight and passed around the short bend. His brow was cold and damp. With an effort and shaking as though with ague, he made the stair head and slunk below. He reached the bottom and made for the door, only to back up against the wall—he had caught the glint of the badge of a special police officer. The officer's head was turned up the street.

Druce did not wait for more. He edged his way toward the basement stairs and listened to the entrance of two men.

"Murphy went up-stairs. I don't know the other guy—" one of them remarked.

"From a paper, I think—" responded the second.

This and scraps of conversation passed up the stairway.

Limping and shivering Druce made his way like a hunted shadow. He reached the door and pushed his head into the street, then with an effort which seemed to crack every joint in his body he straightened himself and stepped onto the sidewalk, with an assumption of unconcern, the struggle portrayed on his haggard face.

He plugged silently on, his eyes narrowing with pain and his jaws twitching. He went a block, then paused, bordering collapse, and looked back. The street was deserted. He went his way limping and with a smothered groan.

He had barely turned, when a slight almost girlish figure slipped out of the doorway he had left and hurried in the opposite direction.

Druce crossed the street and a few minutes later hobbled along Ecker Street into Market, just below Sutter, and propped himself against a mail box.

There were a few pedestrians on the near side; the street itself had little traffic.

Suddenly his figure sprang into life. Down the street raced a taxi, with a bigger machine following and ahead of them a street car on the inner track. The three would pass almost in a line.

Druce plunged straight across the road.

The taxi swerved out of his way, the street car was abreast, and the other machine, which carried no light, was running between them.

It seemed the action of a madman. Druce was not mad, he had calculated the movements of the vehicles with a niceness that allowed even for his impaired condition. He swung about as the big machine missed him by a hair's breath and deliberately threw himself backwards. It was all in a flash; he lay where he fell.

The street car pulled up, but the machine continued on its way.

Druce's groans were genuine enough and his mud-splashed and broken appearance commanded attention; there was none but he to swear it was not an accident.

"Don't move him!" It was a burly policeman who spoke.

The guard from the street car, who had called to his aid a civilian, desisted.

"The ambulance will be here in a moment," continued the speaker, "leave it to them. An inexperienced man can do more harm than an accident, most any time."

Druce stirred on the cold, grimy roadway; he half rose, only to sink again, to move was worse than freezing to death.

"Here, shove this under his head, anyway!"

Druce grunted a word of thanks, things were coming his way at last. The job in the morning, even if assured, he would not be able to fill. He certainly required overhauling! If only the ambulance would arrive!

It came at last. They handled him with care and took him to the Emergency Hospital.

Late in the afternoon of the following day, the doctor and a big florid man stood at the foot of Druce's cot. "No bones broken, Doc?" the man was saying.

Druce opened his eyes.

"They got me at the Ferry! I was making the twelve-twenty boat," he explained. "I couldn't believe I had struck the man! I thought he was drunk!"

They moved around to the side of the bed.

"How do you feel?" the doctor questioned. "A bit sore?" The patient nodded.

"I'm sorry!" the stranger remarked, addressing Druce. "The doctor, here, is a friend of mine!" he added reassuringly. "We'll fix you up between us!"

"Who was the big guy?" Druce asked of the nurse.

"That's Lawyer Pilkington. Doctor calls him 'Fred'!"

"Save to-day's paper for me, nurse, I'd like to keep it and look over the account of the accident."

When he got it, the accident received scant attention. He read the headlines of a more startling nature:

BUSINESSMAN KILLS HIS PARTNER, THEN DIES OF HEART DISEASE

"It looks natural!" he commented. Hell! It was a night. The fall, and then Ershaw! I knew he had a gun. If I hadn't fired, he'd have shot me up without a question! Good God!" he concluded, "I didn't pull, either! The shock simply set it off, and—he dropped!"

John Druce was making good; he held a job in a down-town market by day, and increased his savings by a side line in his room at night. He worked with a punctuality that should have shamed even a clock. He shut down his work each evening at ten o'clock and ventured out for a bite, before retiring.

With the same regularity, each night, he passed a young woman in her early twen-

ties, in a turn of the stairs. Neither spoke until an eventful night in which he surprised her waiting a few steps below the customary place. Taken aback, she vented an exclamation.

"Do you wait here every night?" slipped out at the suspicion.

Abashed, she simply nodded.

A moment's confusion in which the girl drooped her eyes and raised them, only to find the young man betraying a friendly curiosity. Social life, even though the merest fringe, has a charm of its own. He had been living like a recluse.

"I was wondering if you would ever recognize me!" she uttered simply.

"Recognize you?" he repeated questioningly.

"That night, I looked through the glass near the door, and you sat in the chair."

"The chair? The glass?"

The mystery was too much for him.

"And you let the revolver fall—" her words had sunk to a whisper.

The surge of Druce's thoughts was a mill-race. Did it mean that she had witnessed the tragedy? Perhaps it was only a "plant" to get him. What a catastrophe! And he lulled into security and circumstances all coming his way!

"I don't understand you!" he declared, although it did not come natural to lie.

"We can't talk here," she counselled. "I'm dead straight! If you have business, some other time will do."

Druce made to pass on. The thought of what suspense would mean to him, considering what he had already suffered; the shattering of all his hopes if he adopted flight, and then the possibility that the girl meant well, pulled him up again, and, he said, "I was only going out for supper—"

"I know," replied the girl. "I've often watched you go into Chonton's."

Her candor held him nonplused.

"What do you follow me about for?" he demanded.

"I wanted to meet you."

The young fellow was disconcerted. He leaned against the wall, she against the balustrade. There was silence for a long moment.

"What are you going to do?" she ques-

tioned, anticipating him by a fraction of a second.

"Up-stairs, if you like," he assented, turning as he spoke.

They walked together.

"Yours or mine?" was what he asked, when they reached her landing.

"Mine," she replied, without the slightest indecision.

They entered her room.

"You sit there," she indicated.

He occupied the only chair, and nursed his hat. She drew a suitcase from under the bed, up-ended it, and sat with her hands in her lap.

"You don't remember me," she began, "because I had only held my job a week, at Bernstein's, when you got fired in October, twelve months ago."

She had his record, there was no denying that, but he did not move an eyelid.

"You remember Flossy Dixon, though? She was my cousin. It was she that Ershaw beat up. You remember what Mr. Saddler said?"

With the shock of the question the events of that night returned.

"You think that you killed Ershaw, don't you?"

The question was too much for him, his stolidity bent like a bow, his face slowly mantling with color after a moment's pallor; his lips parted, but without a word.

"You're wrong, *I did!*" she surprised him with.

There was a moment's break before she resumed, and then she explained:

"I stood at his elbow, waiting, hidden, and, as he paused at the door, I fired. Your shot missed and struck the back wall. Had I missed, I must have shattered the glass beyond him. The papers only mentioned one wound, didn't they?" She spoke measuredly.

John Druce's reasoning faculties seemed to have deserted him, he was dazed, the confession was so mysteriously gratuitous.

"Why do you tell me this?" he asked.

"Simply couldn't contain it longer. I have wanted to break in upon your reserve, but you would not recognize me—"

"I never saw you to my knowledge, before meeting you in this house!"

She did not seem to comprehend. "You saw me that night," she argued, "I stood looking over the wood paneling, and you stared at me!"

"I did not see you!"

The denial, simple as it was, was an admission of his complicity; he realized this.

"Did you tell me this to relieve your mind, or, mine?" he asked her pointedly.

"Both, and, I felt you should know."

Druce breathed freer than for months. The next moment he was more alarmed than ever, the girl had not finished speaking:

"And, for the last few mornings a man has been watching this place. When you go out and board the street car, he cuts straight across the track and down the side street. I followed him this morning to an office in Sacramento Street, and he spoke to a police officer waiting for him. I walked slowly past; on his door was, 'McLean, Detective.'"

Druce sat pale and silent; he felt a double responsibility.

("I don't want to dig into your affairs," he apologized. "Tell me, what made you shoot Ershaw?")

Her eyes were burningly bright, her lips set vindictively.

"He was noting but a spoiler, a beast! He made a plaything of my cousin! She clung to him like a beaten dog, without a will of her own! I tried to tear her from him—send her away—but it was hopeless—he had ruined her, and nothing, short of his death, could set her straight again!"

"I am forewoman at Bernstein's, and have keys to the place. For three nights I had watched and waited. I saw and heard all between you and the other partner, and, when he dropped dead, it was horrible! My strength seemed to give out, but I waited. When Ershaw stood in the doorway, I could not fire! I was sick with fear. Then, somehow, he pulled a revolver out of his pocket. I pressed the trigger, and it was done. When you turned to the 'phone, I sneaked away—"

The recounting of that night brought a chill into the room. With it, from beyond the door, came a suspicious sound; slight, but audible.

They rose of one accord, the suitcase

falling on its side with startling effect. A moment's pause, and there came a tap at the door. They exchanged glances, the girl indicating by a raised hand that she would attend, the young fellow crossing over in the shelter of the door.

"Could you tell me which is John Druce's room?"

"What do you want with him, anyhow?" her tone detonating a rising ire. "You are the shrimp," she snapped, "who has watched this house! There is no room for crooks in here," she assured him, "and it's a cinch Mr. Druce is no friend of yours!"

"My dear lady," came suavely from the man, "Mr. Druce, I don't doubt, is a friend of yours! You'll forgive me? I have a communication I wish to deliver to him personally—at least, I was instructed to—and I thought I would meet him as he goes out—"

"It's very kind of you!" she declared, frigidly.

"Yes! Ahem!" he coughed, passing over the sarcasm. "The gent who commissioned me is a personal friend of Mr. Druce!"

"Not McLean, Inquiry Agent!" she shot at him.

"Oh, dear no!" he affected. "But, say—" he broke off with, "take this letter, and see that he gets it. You will confer a great favor on me and the gentleman I referred to, a Mr. Frederick Pilkington." He rolled the name out with great unction.

"Do you mind signing for it?" he requested, as the girl took the letter, somewhat ungraciously.

She wrote, in a rather mannish hand; "Grace Agnew."

Druce's face shone with anticipation as he took the letter.

"Say, girl," he exclaimed approvingly, in a robust whisper, "You're a fighter for sure!"

She glanced swiftly at him, then turned away abashed. He opened the letter. It ran:

DEAR JOHN:

Yours of the twenty-first to hand, with the amount enclosed, which, I confess, I feel sore at receiving—but there, lad, it's your way of doing things.

I am indeed glad that you are on your feet again, in a double sense of the word, and

will be delighted if you will call. I send this by messenger, as you gave no address.

Yours sincerely,

FREDERICK PILKINGTON.

Grace Agnew joined in the sigh of satisfaction that escaped him as he folded the epistle and slipped it into his pocket.

"That fellow's a real man—a regular prince!" he said.

Whereat, he told her of how he had thrown himself on the roadway and afterward been cared for by the innocent driver of the car, passing lightly over the fact that he had made good the money he would only accept on loan from Mr. Pilkington.

"Perhaps it's a convenient argument," Druce admitted, "but Mr. Pilkington declares that to kill a person in self defense, or in the defense of another, is truly no crime. He's a clever attorney. I wonder what he would say, if he knew—"

"Don't tell him!" the girl protested.

Through his mind had flashed a review of the tragedy in its new light; Druce was sorry for her. It was not quite an accident, as when he fancied his bullet had done the work.

"I fear you look upon me as a terrible woman—" was her confirming remark.

"No, no!" he hastened. "A man, to say nothing of a woman, who takes a chance and wipes out a thing like that, does society a good turn. But good God! Society don't get the hang of it!"

It was close on midnight when he at last rose to leave, the unspoken pact resting on two very serious people.

It was morning. Daylight was creeping from the bay across the city; the street lights had ceased to shine, and the fringe of day was chill and gloomy; a fog hung over all. To John Druce the raw air was nothing; his mind revolved in a new orbit. He had slept but little, the revelation of Grace Agnew seized both body and mind. It was wonderful that she had come to him, but the pity of it, that she should have killed this man! In his eyes she was a heroine—at least she had saved his life. What a pity she had to do it—what a shame! Damn the scoundrel! Damn him!

With these perturbing flashes he pulled

up suddenly, almost colliding with her. She had stepped from the doorway, where she had been waiting, outside her place of business in Mission Street. She had insisted that they meet, instead of journeying together. He was there to recover the pistol she had used. It lay beyond her reach beneath one of the presses in Bernstein's workroom; she had thrown it there.

She greeted him with an air of relief. He, strangely, was unresponsive and gave her simply: "Good morning."

In taking the key, which opened the outer door, his hand came in contact with hers; it was ungloved, and warm; he fancied it trembled.

A few minutes later, stretched on the floor with a length of wood, he raked the revolver from its hiding. The room was large and almost in gloom save for a single electric light; its rays fell directly on him. He rose to one knee, the weapon in his hand; breaking it open, he paused, his eyes strangely bright.

"Look!" he breathed. "You didn't shoot him! The thing never went off!"

She gave a smothered cry and, stooping, reached over and rested her hand on his.

"I am glad—so glad!" Her words were throaty, a confused crimson chasing the whiteness of the moment before.

He met the dumb confession in full comradeship; the joy of the moment was too deep for words.

Beneath his absorbing gaze, her eyes drooped. His lips moved and he moistened them, then, almost gruffly, he said:

"I'm glad, too! It's like finding a gold mine!" A moment's awkwardness, and then, "It's not going to make any difference, is it?" imprisoning her hand at the same time.

She did not reply directly to his inference, instead she corrected: I am glad, not because I did not do it, but because it seemed to push me outside everything. You, yourself—" She got no further.

"What!" was the somewhat surprised exclamation.

"Seemed to freeze me out. Down-stairs, I felt sorry I had asked you—"

"Oh, I say!" he protested. "What bunk! I was figuring on what tough luck that you

had to do it! With me it's different, I can go through with it. Mr. Pilkington said he'd do me a good turn any time—"

"Don't you tell him!" she commanded, in affright. "You wait—until you have to! No one will look at things as we do!"

"He's a good scout," he assured her, "and whatever he says will stand!"

"If you do, then I'll tell him you missed—that I shot him!" was her convincing retort. With that, she took the revolver, turned about, and left him.

He strode from the room to the area beyond. She had reached the floor above and was still ascending. He skipped up after her, reaching the fourth landing as she turned off toward Saddler's room. He was too late and went no further, the muscles of his face tensely set.

A pistol shot rang out; then all was still—only the gray morning and themselves heard it. The janitor had gone, and work was yet an hour removed.

Druce did not stir; he had divined that this would happen. The girl came hurrying back, her eyes illuminated with triumph.

"I did it!" she cried. "Now you can't tell!"

She had fired into the wall, opposite Saddler's door, to refute Druce's testimony

if necessary, and take the blame on her own shoulders.

She came to him, he with arms folded to suppress an almost irresistible desire to seize her. Each moment in her presence made it more difficult to appear normal.

"What did you do that for?" he asked, his voice feelingly heavy.

"Because—" she said, and hung fire.

"You are wonderful!" he emitted. "Made of the right stuff! You fall into a fellow's life like a golden splash and set him on fire! I don't feel quite myself without you around—I forget what I've done—and everything!"

"You have nothing to remember or forget—" she uttered, in the haze of things. "But you must not tell!" she demanded.

"I can't," he admitted, "you've driven me into a corner!"

"You don't want to, do you?"

The intonation came to him as a challenge; his answer seemed to linger in the muscles of his arms.

"No, I don't want to!" he jerked out, at the same time seizing her forcefully.

"Stop, stop!" she protested, as his hot breath brushed her cheek. "Promise me, on your word of honor, that you won't tell, first!"

"So help me God, I do!"

NEW YORK

YOU'D call it a successful day—
 Business was good, I've eaten well,
 I've had a smoke and seen a play,
 I'm at a comfortable hotel;
 But save for ready looks that sell,
 Or service that has known its place,
 Given its friendliness for pay,
 I haven't seen—no, not all day,
 And, oh, how quickly I could tell!—
 A friendly face.

Under the lights not one I find
 In all these crowded streets of men—
 Thousands ahead, thousands behind,
 Not one that stays within my ken!
 Closer to look at five or ten,
 I turn, until I lose the trace.
 It's like a man that's going blind,
 This peering at the dark to find,
 And put the world to rights again,
 A friendly face!

Witter Bynner.

Jerry the Spirited

by Charles Wesley Sanders

Author of "Fugitives," "His Arcadian Wife," etc.

CHAPTER X.

ON GUARD.

JERRY'S luck was with him. He reached the window and looked inside. The carriage was empty. Still he stood disappointedly staring into the interior. If Jensen had been sitting there, he would have killed him without the least compunction.

Jerry went back to the front of the carriage. "Where's Jensen?" he asked.

"Who?"

"Sven Jensen, the saloon-keeper."

"Don't know him."

"Didn't he hire you to drive down here?"

"Don't know him."

"Get out of here then."

The driver whipped up his horses.

Jerry hastened down to the river bank. Dayton and Pat were awaiting him there.

"They took the girl into that building there," Dayton said, indicating a squat, rough building huddled against a rise in the ground. "It's the Kickapoo Club. You know what that is. It's supposed to be a fishing club. Jensen belongs to it. There's a gang like him. They come down here Saturdays and Sundays in summer, and drink and gamble. Blame little fishing they do."

"Come on," Jerry said.

They moved toward the building cautiously, holding their revolvers in readiness. As they neared it, a light came on slowly in a room on the side which they were approaching.

"Somebody's lit one of them hangin' oil-lamps," Dayton said.

"Have you been inside the place, Jim?" Jerry asked.

"Once," Dayton answered. "There's a big room in front with a bar at one end of it. The gambling-room is on the other side. There's two private rooms on this side.

"We'll have a look," Jerry said.

They came up under the room from which the feeble light was flowing. Jerry rose to his feet and peered inside. The room was empty. There were a table and several chairs in the room.

Jerry stood silent for a moment. Then a door opposite him was opened. Mamie was ushered into the room by one of the men. She sank into a chair. The man said something to her with a threatening look on his face. She bowed her head.

Jerry's impulse was to send a bullet through the window into the man's breast, but he had to restrain himself. There were two other thugs in there somewhere. If he shot this man, there would be a revolver fight, and Mamie might be injured.

The man withdrew, leaving the girl alone. She listened for a moment, and then she rose and walked softly over to the window outside of which Jerry was standing. Jerry pressed his face close to the pane. Mamie pressed her fingers to her lips to stifle a cry when she saw his face.

Jerry smiled up at her, and her eyes brightened, the fear that had been in them vanishing. Jerry held up three fingers and

This story began in *The Argosy* for January 17.

pointed at the door, questioning her thus silently as to the number of men in the other room. She understood and nodded. Jerry held up his three fingers again, pointed to himself, and nodded at the crouching men beneath him. Again Mamie nodded understandingly.

Jerry wished to convey a further message of assurance to her, but he dared not speak. He fumbled in his pockets and found a scrap of paper and a stub of lead-pencil. He wrote:

Don't be afraid. We'll have you out in a minute. If you hear a noise in the room beyond, don't pay any attention to it. Are you all right?

He held this against the pane till she had read it and once more she inclined her head. Jerry put his fingers to his lips and tossed a kiss to her, and she smiled down at him.

He knew that he had lent courage to her and he wished to act while she profited by it. He stooped to Dayton and Pat and whispered to them to follow him.

They tiptoed around the corner of the building and came out in front of it. A light was burning in a lamp which hung down from the ceiling. The three men were sitting about a table beneath the light. They had a bottle of whisky and glasses.

As Jerry stared into the room, they poured and drank. Then they leaned together and began to talk. Jerry observed that the hands of all of them were above the table. There was no weapon in sight. The men apparently felt so secure that they had not thought it necessary to have revolvers handy.

"We'll creep up on the porch and throw the door open," Jerry said. "There's a bare chance that it will be locked, though I don't think so. Those fellows don't believe there's anybody within a mile of them that will bother them. If the door is locked, be ready to put your shoulder to it with me, Jim."

"Go ahead," Dayton said.

They stepped up on the porch, keeping out of the light which came from the windows. Jerry put his hand on the knob of the door when they gained it and turned it slowly and softly. When he knew the

latch was out of the lock, he pushed against the door. It gave immediately, and he threw it wide and leaped into the room. Dayton and Lavin were just behind him.

The startled men at the table reached behind them, seeking hip-pockets.

"The first man that makes a move except as I tell him gets bored!" Jerry said.

He stood just within the door, a tall, erect figure. His face was a little pale from his recent illness, but the hand that held the big revolver was as steady as if it had been the hand of a statue.

"Up with your hands!" he commanded. "You"—indicating a man at the far end of the table—"if you push that hand one inch nearer your pocket, I'll drill you! Up!"

Three pairs of hands went aloft. The man nearest Jerry stared at him with sudden incredulity.

"Good Gawd!" he said. "It's that feller Donovan. I thought you was dead!"

"Ah!" said Jerry softly. "You're the lads that threw me into the river, are you?"

"We didn't," they chorused.

A smile as hard and cold as ice twisted at Jerry's lips. He moved his revolver so that it covered the breast of the man who had recognized him.

"I remember your voice," he said. "You spoke to Jensen in the boathouse. You tried to kill me. I don't know of any reason why I shouldn't kill you. Do you?"

"I never dumped you into the river," the man declared.

Beneath his cropped, black hair his face had become the color of moldy paste. His lips had dropped apart as he labored for his breath, and his broken, decayed teeth were revealed.

"You're a bird of pretty plumage, ain't you?" Jerry sneered. "Get to your feet."

The man rose on trembling legs.

"Move away from the table."

The man obeyed, but he broke out:

"For Gawd's sake, man, you ain't goin' to shoot me, are you? You ain't goin' to murder me in cold blood, are you?"

Jerry surveyed him with a cold and calculating eye.

"It all depends on what you say when I question you," Jerry said. "If you tell

me a single lie, I'll drill you, so help me God. You see, I know a good deal about this game, or I wouldn't be here. But I don't know all about it. You can lie and not be found out about some things. About some other things you can't. So you see, if you lie, you'll be trapped. I won't say a word. I'll just fire when you tell the first lie. Is that satisfactory to you?"

The man looked at the cold, lean, pale face in which the eyes gleamed as if they reflected fire. A shiver ran through him.

"I'll do the best I can," he said. "I ain't goin' to monkey with a man that can save his life when he's bound hand and foot and has had a big dose of chloroform."

"Where are you from?" Jerry asked.

"Buffalo, last," the man answered. "We're sailors. We sail the lakes in summer and the sea in winter. But we got stranded in Buffalo last November till we was afeared we would be too late to get a berth on the coast. We had been in this here jungle before and had seen some things done that meant easy money. So we come here, and Jensen picked us up. He seemed to have several deals on that he wanted to pull off."

"And you go into 'deals' without asking any questions," Jerry suggested.

"A man has to live," the other retorted sullenly.

"What's the idea in kidnappin' Miss McBride?"

"The girl in there? I give it up. Jensen framed that an' told us where to take her. He said not to harm her. I suppose he wants her for hisself."

"Do you know a man named Manners?"

"I don't."

"Look out!"

The man cast an appealing glance at his companions.

"I swear to Gawd I don't know no such person," he said. "Ask them."

"How about it?" Jerry asked the two men.

"Never even heard of him," one of them growled, and the other nodded affirmation.

"What will be Jensen's next job for you?" Jerry demanded.

"He didn't say."

Jerry wished to know if there had been

any development of Manners's suggestion about the pay-car. He stepped quickly up to the man and put the muzzle of his revolver against his chest.

"The truth," he gritted.

An agonized look of helplessness came into the fellow's eyes.

"He didn't say," he whimpered.

Jerry saw that he was telling the truth, and he reluctantly gave up his questioning. Evidently Jensen had used these thugs for the purpose of attempting to dispose of Jerry and of kidnapping Mamie. If he was developing the pay-car plan, he was doing it with other aids. But, Jerry now bitterly reflected, he had a host of those.

"Is that door locked?" he asked, pointing to the door of the room in which Mamie was held.

"I got a key," the man said, and he pulled it from his pocket and advanced to the door.

"Just a minute," Jerry said. "Do you expect Jensen down here?"

"He didn't have us steal that girl for nothin'," the man answered. They had neared the door and his voice sank to a whisper. "If you think Jensen has something else on, you better get on his trail," he went on. "He's nervous since the night he thought he had you put out of the way. I think he was goin' to keep this girl here till he pulled somethin' off and then he was goin' to force her to go away with him."

"What th' hell you whisperin' about, Buck?" one of the men at the table demanded. "Tryin' to make yourself solid all by your lonesome? Huh?"

The man at the door gave the other a venomous glance.

"Shut your mouth," he said. He resumed to Jerry: "What is this here word you say when things begins to pile up? Well, I do' know. But you can see what I mean. This here Jensen is poisoned with his own whisky an' his nerves is rotten. He didn't know he would be bothered by havin' killed you, but he is. Things is comin' to this here what-d'ye-call-it-kind of a climax. That's it. He will be movin' lively on whatever job he's been figurin' on. You understand me, Jerry?"

"Don't you 'Jerry' me," Jerry ground

out. "I'll bust your face wide open if you do. You tried to murder me, you kidnaped a girl, and now you're doin' your friends dirt. But I understand you."

"Are you goin' to let me go, Mr. Donovan? I've told you everything."

Jerry looked into the pasty face and the terror-stricken eyes.

"God must have some special purpose in puttin' men like you on this earth," he said, "but I don't know what the purpose is. Get back to the table and stay there before I smash you!"

The man went back to the table.

"You better take their guns away from them, Jim," Jerry said over his shoulder.

Dayton moved forward to follow the suggestion. Jerry unlocked the door and stepped into the room. Mamie rose from one of the chairs and sprang into his arms.

Her lips clung to his and her arms held him. Jerry knew the measure of her love then as he had never known it before.

"How'd it happen, honey?" he asked after a moment.

"One of those men came to the window and pointed a revolver at me," she answered. "He made me open the door, and then the other two pinioned my arms and made me go with them to the carriage. They said they would shoot me if I made a sound. How did you get here, Jerry?"

Jerry explained. Mamie gazed into his eyes. "I love you, Jerry," she said. "And some day, somehow, I'll marry you."

"The way things is breakin' you better be doin' that pretty quick," Jerry said. "You can't go back to the station."

"I must," Mamie said.

"And be stolen away again?"

"I'll be careful, watchful," Mamie said. "I won't let them take me unawares next time. Besides, those men won't have a chance again, will they?"

"Others will," Jerry said. "Jensen is back of all this, Mamie—Jensen and Manners."

"Oh, that's impossible," Mamie cried. "Manners wouldn't consent to that. I—he—he's—"

Jerry held his breath, awaiting a disclosure, but she would go no further. He knew that it was useless to press her.

"Marry me," he said with a hint of

stubbornness in his tone. "Then you won't have to work. I have no job now, but jobs are easy things to get. I have upwards of a thousand dollars in the bank up-town."

"I can't marry you now, Jerry," Mamie declared.

"Let me lend you some money, then."

"I can't do that, either. I must go back to work. I must go there now, Jerry. I hadn't time to tell the despatcher I was leaving, of course."

"Wait here a minute and I'll go with you," Jerry said heavily.

He went into the other room, closing the door behind him. He called Dayton to one side, excusing himself to Pat, and leaving Pat to keep the men covered.

"Jensen is coming here soon," Jerry said. "This fellow says his nerves are on the raw. We got to throw a scare into him. The more nervous he gets the more likely he will be to make some kind of a break. I can't have him arrested just yet. Some time I'll explain why, Jim."

"Yeh, put your explanations on ice so's they won't spoil," Dayton scoffed. "What in hell do I care about explanations? I'm havin' a first-rate time—what d'ye want done with that dirty Swede?"

"I'll take Miss McBride away," Jerry said. "You get these fellows lined up so that you can keep them covered. I don't want Jensen to see you. These fellows are a chicken-hearted bunch, anyhow. You can tell them that they can make their getaway to the nearest freight-train if they do what you say while Jensen is here. Make them unlock the door for Jensen, leavin' him to believe the girl is in there. Don't let them give him any explanation. His nerves will have another load to bear while he wonders how a girl escaped from a locked and barred room. This here fellow says things is comin' to one of them climaxes with Jensen. If he's more nervous than he is now, he'll drink his head off. The more fuddled he is the more likely he'll be to stub his toe."

"I see," said Dayton. "Where are you takin' Miss McBride, as you are now pleased to designate her, though I've called her Mamie for more years than you've knowed her."

"She insists on going back to work," Jerry said.

"And you're going to let her?"

"I can't help myself, Jim. I'm tied up. There's some things I don't understand. I've just got to wait."

"Well, when you get her back on her job, you call up Billy Bartholomew and Jack Curry. Tell them to come to the station. Don't leave that girl alone there a minute. This here Swede is going to be a wild and furious man when he gets the little dose that's waiting for him here. When he throws caution to the four winds, as they say, you want to look out for him, because he will be runnin' amuck."

"I'll do it," Jerry said. "I planned something like that, but I didn't know just who to call."

"Them two will be there all dolled up with light artillery and filled with nerve and fight. You better get the girl out of here."

Jerry led Mamie from the other room, interposing his body between her and her captors.

"We've got quite a little walk ahead of us, Mamie," Jerry said.

"And we must hurry, Jerry. I must get back to the station."

They gained the tracks, and Mamie clung to Jerry's arm. The ice and rain storms had passed, and the heavens were full of brilliant stars now. But it was slippery underfoot, and they had to walk carefully.

They had been alone so little lately and their talks when they did meet had been so fruitless that they walked in silence. After a while the block-light at the station came into view. Mamie stopped and faced Jerry. She did not speak, but she put her arms around his neck and drew down his head. Their lips met.

"I love you!" the girl whispered.

"I know it," Jerry said, as solemn as a preacher, "and I hope to God you'll be my wife before long."

He took her face between his hands and kissed her forehead, and they went on again. At the station the girl clung to him for a moment.

"Don't be afraid," Jerry said. "I'll see that no harm comes to you."

"You're not going to stay and watch me, are you, Jerry?" she asked. "You mustn't."

"I won't stay and watch you," Jerry said. "I'm going right now."

So that she could not question him further, he hurried away along the platform. At the end of it, he turned. Mamie was standing in the light from the bow-window, watching him. He waved his hand to her and hastened along the track.

The telephone exchange was only a block away and when he was out of Mamie's sight he broke into a run and did not stop till he was in the exchange.

He got two sleepy men on the telephone, but they came brightly awake as he explained to them what he wanted. They said they would be at the station in a few minutes.

Jerry went back to the station and kept in the shadows till they came. He had to smile at the eagerness with which Bartholomew and Curry greeted him.

"Think there'll be trouble, ol' hoss?" Curry asked.

Jerry explained briefly what had already happened.

"It might happen again," he said.

"If it only would," Curry said.

Jerry did not know the two men very well, but he accepted them on Dayton's recommendation. Jerry was aware that they were running as extra brakemen on the road. They had come out of the West a few months previously.

He fixed his solemn eyes on them now as he prepared to leave them.

"Boys," he said gravely, "that's my girl down there at the station. Don't let any harm come to her."

He put out his hand and they gripped it one after the other.

"Harm ain't got no more show with her than a lemon sour has to make a hit with Sven Jensen," Curry said.

"Jensen may mix in on you," Jerry said. "You want to look out for him."

"That Swede," the two men chorused.

Jerry left them. He had a feeling that this struggle was growing bigger day by day. On his side he was enlisting clean, though rough men, men who would fight

at the drop of the hat for a friend or for what they believed was right. Jensen was enlisting the vilest creatures of the waterfront and the saloons.

"If there is anything in right and wrong, this thing ought to show signs of clearin' up before long," Jerry said. "I dunno, though."

He had begun to consider right and wrong only so recently that he was not an expert analyst of either. But he was doing the best he could.

CHAPTER XI.

NEW FORCES.

NOW he had to find Jensen and keep on his trail till he discovered what the latter intended to do about the pay car. The car would be passing through the village next day and would lie over somewhere to the east. Jensen doubtless would be preparing for his attack on it.

Jerry saw that he would have to go to the Jungle again, and he set out for it after he had left Curry and Bartholomew.

The weather had been mild that day, but at dusk the temperature had started to go down. Now snow was beginning to fall in big, heavy flakes. By the time Jerry reached the head of Jensen's street, he was shut in. He could not see the building on the corner, though he was within ten feet of it. He was glad of this, because if he had to follow Jensen he could do so without being seen.

He did not want to show himself in Jensen's place. He wanted Jensen to keep on worrying about Jerry's supposed death. He knew that when a drinking man got a case of nerves, he became about as unstable as a man could become.

He might have a chance to gain the storage room adjoining Jensen's bedroom, but if Jensen again found him there, he had no doubt that Jensen would kill him or he would have to kill Jensen.

He stood on the corner, waiting. Sooner or later some one he knew would come that way. Dayton had passed the word among the railroad men about Jensen's conduct, but there were a few who would not turn

against the Swede on that account. Jensen had usually been good for a between-pay-days "touch," and some of the men owed him money. If they hadn't the cash, they could also get limited credit at Jensen's.

Jerry knew, however, that it was a curious fact that these men disliked the saloon man. Jensen might lend or give credit, but he did it in an insulting way. These men lived from pay-day to pay-day, but they were proud after their own fashion. Some of them even nursed a lively hatred for the saloon-keeper.

It was one of these whom Jerry waited for, to bring him information from inside Jensen's saloon.

Half an hour passed before a figure bulked itself out of the gloom. Before Jerry caught sight of it, the man was so close to him that Jerry was able to reach out a hand and lay it on the man's arm. The newcomer stopped, peering.

"Jeerus'lum!" he ejaculated. "Jerry Donovan. I heard you was dead. You ain't a ghost, are you?"

Jerry smiled and extended his hand.

"Shake, Luce, and see," he said.

The man took his hand, gingerly at first, and then gave it a crushing grip.

"I'm damned," he said, "but I'm glad to see you among the livin', Jerry. What can I do for you?"

"If I ask you to do me a favor, you won't go and tell Jensen, will you?" Jerry asked.

"Me blat to that Swede? I guess not. Let's have it straight, Jerry. You know I'm a friend of yours."

"You were on your way to Jensen's?" Jerry asked.

"Yeh."

"I'll go down the street on the opposite side. I'll wait for you in the entrance to old Hazelman's grocery. You go into Jensen's, and see if he's there and if he's gettin' ready to go out. Have a drink and come and tell me."

Luce was a fireman on the road. He was a big, ungainly man who could handle an amazing amount of alcohol. He was always "broke" and generally in Jensen's debt for both money and credit.

"I dunno about havin' the drink, Jerry," he said with a sheepish grin. "I'm in my

usual financial condition. Jensen might not trust me if he wasn't feelin' just right, and there might be nobody in there to buy. I ought to have the drink first off, to make things look right. If I went in and looked around Jensen might get suspicious."

Jerry handed him fifty cents.

"I hate to take it, Jerry," Luce said.

"I know you do," Jerry retorted. "Run along."

The man was instantly lost in the snow. Jerry went up the other side of the street.

He waited fifteen minutes while Luce spent the fifty cents. Then he saw the snow turn yellow over where Jensen's door was. Five more minutes passed. Then Luce was at his elbow, having gone up the street, crossed over, and returned.

"Jensen is goin' out all right," Luce said. "He has got on his fur coat and cap. He seems to be waitin' for somebody."

"All right," Jerry said. "Much obliged."

"It's a bad night, Jerry," Luce insinuated. "A few more snifters would set right nice with me."

Jerry handed him a dollar and charged both sums up to services rendered. Luce disappeared, and in a moment the light appeared in the snow again. The dollar, Jerry knew, was burning a hole in Luce's pocket.

The door was no sooner closed than there was the rattle of a carriage's wheels on the cobblestones. The carriage stopped in front of Jensen's and for the third time the yellow light showed.

The door of the carriage was opened and slammed shut. The horses started up the street at a moderate pace.

Jerry ran after the carriage. His strength had come back to him sufficiently to convince him that he could keep up with the horses if they did not go too far and move too fast.

The snow favored him in two respects. It prevented his being seen from the rear window of the carriage and it kept the horses to an easy gait. The driver appeared not to want to take any chances of running into another rig.

The chase led Jerry to the railroad tracks. There the carriage took the road which the other carriage had traveled.

"On his way to the club to see Mamie," Jerry said to himself. "He could save himself a trip if he would look into the telegraph office. But he's lucky he don't."

Night travel on this road was never heavy, and here the driver whipped up his horses. They sprang forward, and for a moment Jerry lost sight of the carriage. He increased his pace, and the horses, having steadied down after their first spurt, he soon saw the back of the carriage again.

Running was not easy with the snow half blinding him and the wind trying to whip his breath from his mouth. His breathing was soon labored and a pain came into his side. But he kept on. He would keep on till he dropped or till they arrived at Sven Jensen's destination.

Long before they reached the road leading to the river, Jerry thought they must have passed it. But in time the driver slackened his speed and turned into it. Jerry was gasping now through parted lips. The pain in the side had resolved itself into a dull ache which made his breathing all the more difficult.

When the carriage at length stopped, he was staggering and he wavered to the side of the road and dropped down. He lay for a moment at full length, crowding air into his lungs. He knew he need not hasten now, for Dayton and Pat would be at the club to watch Jensen.

The carriage drew over to the other side of the road and remained there. Jensen, Jerry saw, had bidden the driver wait. Perhaps he was figuring on taking Mamie away with him.

After he had got his breath back, Jerry rose and walked slowly past the carriage. The snow was so thick that he could not see the driver on his seat, and he knew that he himself was unseen.

As he turned down the river, he saw that a light from the club was feebly trying to cast its beams through the snow. He edged forward toward the light. Before he reached the window through which it shone, a hand was laid on his shoulder and Pat Lavin's voice was in his ear.

"You needn't to worry about follerin' Jensen, Jerry," Pat said. "Dayton is on the job. My, but he has been rough with

them criminals since you left. They have as much courage now as sheep.

"That Jim Dayton is some man. He is a good thinker. When you left, he gave over the job of watchin' the men to me and went prowlin' over this here club. He finds there is a garret up-stairs. It's a fine place to listen to what's being said below. Dayton has two guns on him, and I have one. Dayton told those suckers that if they made a move they would be dead men. He said they was a railroad gang out here, brought by you, to break into the place and annihilate them if a sound of struggle come out to them when Jensen arrived. So all you need to do is to wait, Jerry."

"Dayton's a good man in a pinch," Jerry said.

They stood away from the house so that they would not be seen if Jensen should come out unexpectedly.

It had not occurred to Jerry that anyone else would come to the place, and he was unprepared for the three figures that suddenly loomed out of the snow. He was sure he and Pat would be seen, but the men passed them with bent heads. The door was opened and closed.

"We've got to get up close to the door," Jerry said. "The arrival of those three men may give the other fellows courage. They may tell Jensen what has happened."

They edged up till they were just beside the door. There they stood, listening intently for a sound within the room.

Jerry's fear was well founded—for five minutes. When the newcomers entered the room, the others had an impulse to confess to Jensen that the girl was no longer their prisoner.

But the same thought came to all of them. If they so confessed, Jensen would punish them. They had seen that he was nervous and irritable. He had been drinking a good deal. The men did not know the others who had just arrived. But they knew their kind. They were professional criminals, reckless and bloodthirsty. At a signal from Jensen they might neatly and quickly dispose of the three guards. Besides, Jensen would know presently that Mamie had escaped. When he did learn that, he would refuse to pay the men the

money he had promised them. They had nothing to gain by confession and all to lose.

So they held their peace.

The three newcomers sat down, back from the table, and eyed the original three with cold disfavor.

"You seem to have a crowd, mister," one of them said.

He was a thin, slightly built man with a face like mottled marble. It was as cold and hard as marble, too.

"They'll be leavin' in a minute," Jensen said. He turned to one of the men. "How's the girl business?" he asked.

"She's been meek," the man answered. "I reckon she's asleep. They ain't been a sound from that room for more'n two hours."

The leader of the criminals got to his feet swiftly and noiselessly.

"Girl?" he said harshly. "I didn't know there was any girl in this. If you're mixin' a girl with business, just count us out. Them two things never did mix and they never will."

He turned on Jensen a look of such utter malignity that Jensen felt a shiver of acute fear run through him. He hastened to apologize and explain.

"She was just stoppin' here till you men came," he said. "She's leavin' right away. Bring her out, boys, and take her to the carriage down the street. Take her to my place. Tell Bill to see that you get in without bein' seen. Hustle, now."

The men moved toward the door of the adjoining room, but with less alacrity than suited Jensen. He spat out an oath at them.

"Hurry," he ordered.

One of the men opened the door. On the threshold he stopped, staring in pretended bewilderment.

"Before Gawd," he whispered, "she's gone."

Jensen's chair was overturned by the swiftness of his rising. He ran to the door and stood staring over the shoulders of the other men. Then fury ran riot in him. He seized the man nearest him and bore him back. The man went down. Jensen cast himself on him and started to beat him, mouthing curses as he did so.

He was stopped by the cold muzzle of a revolver being pressed against his temple. He looked up. The leader of the criminals was stooping to him, holding a revolver in his right hand.

"I told you them two things didn't mix," the man said in icy tones. "If you're going to do business with us, let that fellow up and get him an' his friends out of here. If you don't, we're done, and when we quit we'll have a little bill to collect from you for our trouble."

This was Jensen's first association with professional criminals. Heretofore he had dealt with thugs. He saw that he was opposed by a man of a new type, a harsh, cold, merciless man. He released his hold of the thug and got to his feet.

"Get out of here, all three of you," he said.

"How about our money?" one had the courage to ask.

"To hell with you and your money," Jensen ground out. "Go!"

One of the men opened the door cautiously. He was afraid of Jensen and his companions and he was also afraid of the gang of honest men whom Dayton had conjured up as waiting outside.

But they had to go and they stepped outside and closed the door. Pat and Jerry saw them. Pat took a forward step, but Jerry restrained him. He let the men get away from the building and then he ran after them.

"Just a minute," he said briskly.

The men turned.

"You came within an inch of having your heads blown off when you came out of that door," Jerry said. "How did Jensen take the girl's disappearance?"

"He's wild," one of the men answered.

"What did he say to you?"

The man rubbed his throat.

"He'd have killed me if it hadn't been for one of them criminals he's got in there."

"Who are they?" Jerry asked.

"I never see 'em before an' I hope to Gawd I never see 'em again."

There was no doubting his sincerity. Jerry perceived that these men had been hired by Jensen merely to kidnap Mamie. Now Jensen was through with them.

"Where are you going now?" Jerry asked.

"We're goin' to get out of this town as fast as we can go," the spokesman replied.

"Don't be around here in the morning," Jerry said.

"Not us," they chorused, and they sped away through the snow.

Jerry was sure they had had enough and he was glad to see them go. He saw that he and his friends would have all they wanted to do to concentrate on Jensen and his new associates.

It was a full hour before Jensen left the club. He came out alone and hurried off.

"This minute," said old Pat, a warrior by birth, "would be a good one to nab them fellas inside there. Me an' you could put the guns on them and Dayton would come hurryin' to our aid most joyful."

"We can't do that," Jerry said. "It's not so simple. We've got to know from Dayton what they talked about."

"I'll bet Dayton's ears are as big as his body," Pat said.

In fifteen minutes the three men came out. They stood in the doorway glancing about after the furtive manner of their kind. But Pat and Jerry had withdrawn to a safe distance and the men could not see them. The men departed. Pat and Jerry waited.

There was no light in the club now. They went up to the door and stood outside it. Dayton was alone in there, but Jerry was fast learning caution and restraint, and he wanted Dayton to make the first move.

But Dayton, too, seemed to have grown cautious. He waited what seemed to Jerry a long time before he opened the door and whistled softly. Jerry whistled back and spoke Dayton's name.

Dayton stepped outside and they moved closer to him.

"Coast clear?" Dayton asked.

"All clear," Jerry answered.

"Come into my club, then," Dayton grinned. "Come in and be my guests. We have a nice fire here."

"It 'll feel damn good," Jerry said.

They entered the room which Jensen and his men had lately left. For a while Jerry and Pat hugged the fire and then Jerry turned about to Dayton.

"Well, Jim?" he asked softly.

"Did you see those three cutthroats come in a while ago?" Dayton asked.

"Yes, and we sent the others on their way when they came out. They said Jensen was furious."

"Jensen was furious at them, but he wasn't furious at the last three. My God, Jerry, I never heard a man talk the way one of them men did! Talk about ice! He's colder than the North Pole. If you cut his heart out, he wouldn't bleed a drop. And he has got Jensen scared."

"They're out to rob the pay car to-morrow night. Jensen had them brought here from some place to pull the job for him. Jensen has lost his nerve. Too much whisky. Too much hate of you, Jerry, and a wildness about your girl, a sudden madness that has gripped him."

"Jensen has got somebody who will come to his place at dusk to-morrow and tell him where the pay car has laid over. Then they will set out for there at once with fast horses. If they can catch a train some place beyond here they will do it. If they can't they will drive all the way, changing horses here and there. They figure any time between midnight and dawn will be all right."

"Jensen begun to lay down the law to these fellows and tell them what was what. But the leader of them, that cold, hard man, broke in."

"'I'm runnin' the thing,' he says, 'I'll tell the men just what to do.'"

"'Ain't it my job?' says Jensen."

"'Your job?' the man sneers. 'Why, you haven't got the nerve to pull off the robbery of a penny bank in a dark woods at midnight. I'm the boss. If you think I ain't—'

"He stopped there and I couldn't see what he done. But I can imagine that he stuck a gun under Jensen's nose. There was a minute of silence and then Jensen says in a shaky voice:

"'Of course you're the boss. You know more about these things than I do.'"

"'And,' says the man, 'we will share and share alike.'"

"'Half to you and half to me,' says Jensen."

"'A quarter to each of us,' says the man."

"There was silence again. Then Jensen sighed:

"'All right.'"

"They have got robbery down to a fine point, these fellows," Dayton went on. "They plan to rob the pay car and then they plan to rob Jensen. I bet he never gets a cent of the money if they should get into the car."

"They may get into the car," Jerry said. "But they won't get away with the money. You'll have a gang on hand to-morrow night, Jim?"

"I will that," Dayton said. "The word is to come to Jensen, and he is to set out alone. He'll pick up these fellows somewhere along the way and then they'll make their plans about getting over to wherever the car is. What'll you want to do, Jerry?"

"We'd better find out where the car is ourselves," Jerry said, "and make sure about getting a train over there. We want to be ready for them."

"All right. I'll have the men on hand," Dayton said. "We'll leave Curry and Bartholomew to watch Mamie?"

"Yes," Jerry assented. "We'll have to take care of her till this thing is over."

"Then you'll be marryin' her," Dayton hinted.

"God knows," Jerry said. "Let's get out of here."

Meantime the three robbers had gone up-town to a saloon where they could lie low. They knew the proprietor and he knew them. They were safe till they saw fit to stir abroad.

They sat in an upper room with a bottle of whisky on a table between them. They did not speak till they had taken several drinks apiece.

Then the marble-faced man said:

"I hope this snow keeps up. When we get what we want out of this Swede, we'll crack him over the head and toss him out into the snow in the dark. I don't know as many would mourn him. A quarter to him, he agrees, after demandin' a half. Pah!"

He poured and drank again.

Jensen, too, had plunged through the

snow till he came to his saloon. He was wan and haggard, showing his vitality was not so great as his bulk indicated. It was long past midnight now and there were only three men in the barroom. The negro piano player was asleep up-stairs, lulled by his nightly gin. The three men were dozing in chairs by the big stove. Jensen kicked them awake.

"Get out of here," he said.

The astonished bums got out. Jensen could make their kind afraid.

"Get on your clothes and go and bring Pete Thacker and Joe Higgins here," he told the bartender. "Tell them to bring two guns apiece. Say I have work for them with good money in it."

The bartender put on his overcoat and cap.

"One word more," Jensen said. "I'm going out to-morrow night. I won't be back for a long time. You an' me have been together for years. Will you run this place and keep your mouth shut while I'm gone? If you gimme a square deal, I'll make it right with you. What say?"

"I'll give you a square deal," the bartender promised, for he still regarded Jensen as a brutal master of men.

"I'll come back and cut your heart out if you don't," Jensen stated.

When the man had gone, Jensen went up-stairs, taking a bottle of whisky with him. In a room at the end of the upper hall, he roused Manners.

"Get up," he said. "Get wide awake. I want to talk to you. I got work for you. There's trouble stirrin', an' lots of it."

Manners slid out of bed, shivering, and got into his clothing. Jensen gave him two drinks and then drew the bottle to his own side of the table.

"I'll take care of the rest of this," he said. "You got to have a clear brain. You an' whisky don't agree."

He began to talk rapidly, in low tones.

Jerry Donovan thought he was well advised as to what Jensen planned, but he had only an inkling of it. Fear was ruling Jensen now. He was afraid because he thought he had brought about Jerry's death. He was afraid of those men whom he had imported to aid him in robbing the pay car.

He discovered at the last that he would have to do what he could for himself. He had a prevision of policemen descending upon him to lay almost any charge at his door.

And because he was afraid, and because he had been drinking too much and was drinking too much, he was incompetent.

CHAPTER XII.

MAMIE'S SECRET.

AT seven o'clock the next night Jerry arrived at the station to see Mamie before he and Dayton and the men whom Dayton had selected started east.

They had found out late in the afternoon that the pay car would lie over for the night at Harpersville, a hundred miles to the east. Usually the car had been able to make the end of the subdivision by night, but, together with all other trains, it had been delayed.

The snow which had begun the night before was still falling. The temperature had dropped, and there was a whistling wind. Instead of big, soft flakes, the snow was now driving down the wind in icy pellets.

The elements were favoring the men who sought to rob the car. It would be much easier and safer to get into the car at Harpersville than in the yards at the other terminal. Only the paymaster and his assistant and the negro porter would be in it. At the terminal there would have been yardmen and switching crews and the office force in the despatchers' room.

The falling snow would also enable the men to move about without being seen. They could descend upon the car after its occupants had gone to sleep, break into it, and cover those inside with their guns almost before they were sufficiently awake to realize what was happening.

However, the snow would also shield the railroad men who were going to prevent the robbery. They could hide in the vicinity of the car with little peril of discovery.

Jerry and Dayton had made all their plans that day. They intended to drive over to the next station at eight o'clock and board an eastbound passenger train there.

By midnight they would be at Harpersville.

As Jerry now went up on the station platform and looked through the bay-window, he expected to see Mamie in the telegraph office. But she was not there. The day operator was still on duty. Jerry was not concerned about that. If the day man had not heard from Mamie, he would go to meet her.

He entered the waiting-room and went up to the window.

"Heard from Miss McBride?" he asked.

"She 'phoned just a minute ago and asked me to work for her for a couple of hours," the operator answered.

"Anything the matter with her?"

"Not that I know of. She didn't say. Wouldn't wonder if her mother was worse. She's been pretty bad these last few days."

Mamie had not said that her mother's condition was worse. Jerry supposed she had not wanted to add that to his worry.

He left the station and went up the street on which the girl lived. As he came to the front of the house, he saw that lights were burning in a side room and a front room down-stairs. He went up the walk and rapped on the door.

There was no answer to his summons. He knocked again. Still there was no answer.

Jerry was puzzled. He did not believe Mamie would ask the operator to work for her unless she had been unavoidably detained. So far as Jerry knew, there was nothing to detain her except her mother's illness. If that was the cause, it was strange that she did not answer his knock.

He waited five minutes longer and then he went to the house next door. A woman answered his knock there immediately.

"I was looking for Miss McBride," he said. "I knocked on the door but got no answer. Do you know where she is?"

"Why, she went to work at her usual time," the woman said. "She left the house at a quarter to seven, as she always does. Her mother has been pretty sick for several days. But she seemed better to-night. She has been sleepin' all day and she was asleep when I left there a few minutes ago. I been takin' care of her, but

I had to come home for a few minutes. If you'd like to know how she is, I'll go back with you. Well, I must be goin' back anyway, so it ain't no trouble."

She threw a shawl over her head and she and Jerry went back to the house. Jerry waited on the front porch while the woman went inside. In a moment she was back. Her face was pale and her eyes had a startled, frightened look in them. Her left hand was pressed over her heart.

"Why," she said, "I was afraid it would happen like that. You know, Mrs. McBride has been suffering from heart trouble. She's been sleepin' all day, like I said, and she just slep' an' slep' till—till—she—"

"She's dead?" Jerry whispered.

The woman nodded, and tears came into her eyes.

"Poor Mamie," she murmured. "Poor child, Are you her beau, mister?"

"She's going to marry me," Jerry said. "You want me to break the news to her, do you?"

"It'd better come from you," the woman said. "She's a good girl and affectionate. She'll need somebody to comfort her. She thought an awful lot of her mother, especially for the last week or so. She worried about her and had the doctor come every day. Mamie seemed to know her mother hadn't long to live. As far as that goes, the doctor knew it. He said she was liable to go any time."

"You'll have the doctor come?" Jerry asked.

"I'll telephone right away," she answered. "And my husband will take care of all the other matters, just as soon as Mamie decides about them. You'll find her right away and bring her home, mister?"

"Yes," Jerry said.

He hastened back along the way he had come. He was halfway to the station before he remembered that Mamie was not there. He stopped in bewilderment. Mamie was not at home and she was not at work, and she had left to go to work at her usual time.

Jerry feared that Jensen had struck again. This time, desperate as he was, he would try to make his blow a mighty one.

He decided to throw caution to the winds.

He became the hard-hitting man he 'had been before he had adopted his new policy. He walked rapidly toward Jensen's. Before he got there, he stepped into a doorway, out of the snow, and made sure that his revolver was in good working order.

He did not care now whether Jensen discovered that he was alive or not. The game had gone so far that he supposed it would make no difference. Besides, the man who had abducted Mamie before might have told Jensen that they had seen him.

At Jensen's he cast aside hesitation and threw open the door. He strode boldly across the room to the bar. On all sides of him there were exclamations of astonishment. The bartenders stopped wiping glasses to stare at him in undisguised dismay and complete bewilderment.

"Gawd, I thought you was dead," one muttered.

"I'm not," Jerry snapped. "Where's Jensen?"

"He ain't been here this afternoon," the man said. "He said he was going away for a few days."

Jerry stared into the man's eyes, but he found no deceit there. Jerry's sudden appearance seemed to have startled the truth out of him.

"Come out in the hall a minute," Jerry said.

The bartender followed him into the hall obediently. Jerry thrust his gun into the pit of the man's stomach.

"Do you know where Jensen went?" he asked.

The man took one look at Jerry's hard, determined face.

"I don't," he protested. "He just said he was going away for a while."

"Where's the man that calls himself Manners?"

Hesitation flickered into the man's eyes. The eyes wavered beneath Jerry's stare.

"You know something about Manners," Jerry said. "I'll give you about five seconds to tell me where he is, if you know."

He pressed on the gun till it bored into the man's fat.

"Manners was here this afternoon and last night," the man whispered. "Him and Jensen had a long talk. I don't know what

it was about, but Jensen'd let Manners have only two drinks and told him he'd take his hide off if he took any more till he got his work done."

"Did either of them say anything about a girl—a Miss McBride?" Jerry demanded.

"Not a word."

"Careful!"

"Hones' to Gawd, not a word, Donovan," the man declared. In the fear that was coming to him he volunteered: "The on'y thing that Jensen said was to tell the liveryman to charge the rig to him. I s'pose Manners was goin' to get a rig to go some place."

"All right," Jerry said. "Don't you breathe a word about this talk to anybody, or Jensen will have to hunt a new bartender before the night is over. Get me?"

"I understand," replied the thoroughly frightened dispenser of drinks.

Jerry slipped out the side door and went to the street. He started for the livery-stable on a run. Every second was precious to him now. If Manners had abducted Mamie, he might take her out of town and turn her over to Jensen if Jensen escaped when the pay-car robbery was attempted.

In the livery-stable he found only the hostler.

"How many rigs have you got out?" he asked the man.

"There's two out," the man said. "One went before I come to work, and the other a little bit before seven o'clock."

"Who got the second one?"

"I didn't know him."

"What 'd he say?"

"Well," said the hostler, "you don't own this here barn and the horses, do you? What right you got to shoot all these here questions at me?"

The hostler was a little gray man with a defiant eye. He didn't look as if he would scare easily. Jerry pulled a five-dollar bill from his pocket.

"I just want about five dollars' worth of information to keep to myself," he said. "Can I get it?"

The hostler pocketed the bill.

"All he said was that he wanted a carriage for about an hour and to charge the bill to Sven Jensen."

"The driver ought to be back soon, then?"

"I been expectin' him every minute. Them horses ain't had no long feed, an' they got to have it before they go far."

"If I handed you another five-dollar bill, could you find out where the driver took this man?"

"Easy."

Jerry handed over another five.

"You jest set back there in the shadows," the hostler said. "When Dan comes in, I'll just ask him carelesslike if he had much of a trip, tellin' him them horses ain't had their long feed. You'll hear what he says. I guess I got a right to know how far them horses is travelin' with nothin' in their stomachs but oats. A horse 'll get indigestion if he don't have his long feed give him proper."

Jerry stepped back into the darkness of the stable. Waiting was irksome, but he had to wait. There was no place here to pick up Manners's trail.

He thought he waited half an hour at least, but not more than ten minutes elapsed before a team was driven in on the floor. The hostler started to unhitch the horses.

"Now, Dan," said the hostler with an effect of irritation in his tone, "that's the last time you get this here team without waiting till they have their hay. I suppose you been drivin' them hell-bent. Are they sweatin'? They ain't had no water since noon neither."

"Naw, I didn't drive 'em hard," Dan answered. "I just went down to the river and dropped this guy an' a girl we picked up at the head of the next street. I don't know what th' hell they want down by the river in this weather. Mebbe they think it 'll freeze an' they'll wait an' go skatin'. I'm goin' to get my supper, ol' Mustard Plaster."

He went out and Jerry emerged from the shadows. He did not wait to thank the hostler, but started for the river on a dog-trot. There were few persons in the street and those that were paid no attention to a white-faced man who was running toward the river.

When Jerry reached the boat-house he saw that it was dark. But it had been dark

the night Jensen had been in it and Jerry was sure that Manners and Mamie were there now. He paused to get his breath and then it occurred to him that Manners might have help. Jensen could whistle up a crew of thugs at any time, because many of them were indebted to him.

On the other hand it was possible that Manners was alone with Mamie. One thing Jerry saw clearly: Jensen was losing what little cunning he had had. It was a brazen and foolish thing for him to have had Mamie taken to the boat-house, because if Dayton, for instance, went seeking her a blind chase might lead him there. Jerry had a glimpse of what whisky and nervous fear were doing to the big Swede.

When he had recovered his breath, he crept around to the rear of the boat-house. The door was closed, but there was a big, worn keyhole in it and Jerry applied an ear to this. For a time there was silence, and then Mamie's voice said quite suddenly:

"Why don't you tell me what you have to tell me? Why did you bring me to a place like this? Couldn't you have told me at the station?"

"Aw, shut up!" Manners said petulantly. "I ain't got anything to tell you."

"You lied, then?"

"Call it that. I had to get you down here. I thought you'd come if I said I was goin' to release you from your promise. I couldn't think of nothin' else to say."

"How long do you expect to keep me here?"

"Till Jensen comes."

"Oh, you're employed by Jensen, are you?"

"Shut up."

Jerry straightened up with a sigh of relief. Certainly only Manners and Mamie were inside the boat-house. Rescue of Mamie would be easy.

For the moment Jerry forgot the sad news he had to break to his girl. Cold rage had wiped recollection of it from his mind. He didn't know what he was going to do to Manners, but it would be sufficient.

He softly turned the knob of the door and when the catch clicked back, he threw the door open and stepped inside. His revolver was in his right hand.

From Manners's talk he judged he was sitting just inside the front door to the left. The light from the snow outside broke the darkness of the interior of the place a little and Jerry's guess was confirmed when he saw the dim figure of a man sitting over there. He pointed his gun at Manners.

"Manners," he said coldly, "I've got you covered. If there is a whisper of sound from your direction, I'll shoot you dead. Mamie, dear, come here."

Mamie ran to him, being careful not to get between him and Manners. Jerry put his arm about her and held her to him.

Then he remembered what he had to tell her. A shiver ran through him. It was a terrible thing to have to pain the girl he cared so much for.

"Here's a match, Mamie," he said huskily. "See if there's a lamp in the place."

Mamie struck a match and found a hanging lantern. She shook it and there was a liquid sound from the oil-container. She pushed back the globe and put the match to the wick. A poor light flowed through the room.

"Get up, Manners," Jerry said. "I know what this is all about. I listened to what you had to say to Miss McBride. It ain't no sin to eavesdrop on the likes of you."

Manners, trembling, got to his feet. Jerry searched him and found a revolver. He put it into his own pocket. Then he turned to Mamie.

He put his hands on her shoulders and looked down into her eyes. Jerry Donovan had never known grief before. He had lost his other father and his mother when he was young, and he had scrambled up to manhood as best he could by his own efforts. He had lived honestly and as decently as the majority of men of his day. But sorrow had passed him by. His heart was full of it now, however, for he was so generous where Mamie was concerned that he accepted her suffering as his own.

The girl divined that something was wrong. For many weeks she had known that her mother was very ill. Lately she had known that her mother must soon die. The doctor had frankly told her that Mrs.

McBride's heart had become a feeble engine.

Her quick mind leaped to a true conclusion. Her lips quivered for a moment, but she bravely steadied them and tears that glistened in her eyes did not fall.

"Is it about my mother, Jerry?" she whispered.

Jerry nodded miserably and his arms slipped down and encircled her.

"What?" Mamie whispered again.

"My poor little girl," Jerry breathed, and in that moment he came to the high eminence of clean manhood.

"She's dead!" Mamie said. "Oh, Jerry."

She clung to him and her cheeks were wet with tears she could no longer fight back. For a while she had to abandon herself to her grief and to her regret that her mother had died when she was not there. But in the end, through her own strength and through the strength she borrowed from the man who loved her, she became calm.

"I want to go home, Jerry," she said. "But first I want you to deal with this man."

Manners, standing back in the corner, had not gathered the purport of their low words. As Mamie and Jerry turned to him, he glared at Jerry.

"You get out of here, Donovan, and leave us be," he growled. "You're only makin' trouble for this girl by the way you're actin'. You can't do nothin'. You can't do nothin', most especially if you care anything about her. You get out an' don't come back."

"No," said Jerry evenly, "I'll not get out. You've got to answer to me, Manners, or whatever your true name is. We're comin' to the end of all this business to-night. I'm goin' to take Mamie home an' I'm goin' to take you with me. I'll hand you over to some friends of mine till later on. Then we'll see."

Manners's lips drew back from his teeth in a sneering smile. He looked at the girl malevolently.

"Is that right?" he asked.

"That's right," Mamie said.

Complete astonishment left Manners's face blank. He tried to speak, but no words came.

After a morrent of staring, during which Mamie and Jerry kept silence, he broke out: "You're crazy, girl."

Mamie said nothing. There was a far-away look in her eyes. Her mind seemed to be back home with the mother she had lost. She scarcely seemed to see the blustering little man before her.

Manners turned to Jerry.

"She's took leave of her senses," he told Jerry, "but maybe you got a grain of yours left. You can't do nothin' to me. This girl's mother lays sick at home. If I get arrested and tell everything about myself, it 'll kill Mrs. McBride. You goin' to let her death lay at your door because you are bound and determined to have your own way?"

A great light broke for Jerry. He saw that somehow or other Mamie had been successfully threatened by this man because she had sought to protect the mother who was ill. That explained a great many things. It explained why Mamie refused to marry him. He turned to her.

"I begin to see things straight a little, honey," he said. "But didn't you think my shoulders would be broad enough to carry any load that was dumped down before you? Why didn't you marry me when I asked you to a couple of times?"

"Oh, Jerry, I couldn't. This man came to me and told me he killed a man years ago when he and another man named Andy Gregg got into a row down in the—the Jungle. He threatened to give himself up to the police if I didn't take care of him. He had learned that my mother had inherited my grandfather's property. He demanded that I give him most of my salary while my mother lived and all of mother's estate when she died.

"I had to promise, Jerry, because mother could not stand the least shock. Any excitement, the doctor said, would kill her. I had to protect mother, Jerry, and so I promised him. It was disgraceful, dishonest, and I felt that I couldn't marry you, Jerry, till I was free of it, till I could at least come to you and tell you the truth. I was to give him thirty dollars a month out of my salary, and he would have about four thousand dollars when mother died."

"He'll not have it," Jerry said. "He'll spend a good many years behind the bars on one charge and another." He wheeled on Manners. "Come on, you, and get out of here," he said. "It's the police-station for you."

But Manners only laughed harshly, scornfully.

"Is that so?" he demanded.

"It's so," said Jerry. "Why not?"

Manners looked at Jerry insolently. His expression was like that of the sneering gambler who plays the high card at the last.

"Because," he said, "you poor fish, I'm the girl's father."

CHAPTER XIII.

JERRY FLAGS A TRAIN.

STUPIFIED, Jerry turned to Mamie. Mamie was pale, but she returned Jerry's gaze with steady eyes.

"It's true," she nodded.

"And he's a murderer!" Jerry said.

"Yes," the man broke in, "I helped Andy Gregg kill Black Jack Thompson years ago. We got into a fight with him and we put him out of business. O' course, we had to run away from here. In time Gregg died and I went along by my lonesome. I got picked up in Denver five years ago and they hooked a robbery onto me. But I didn't commit it. They sent me to prison. I just got out a bit ago. I come back here because I was gettin' old and I wasn't clever nor strong any more. I had to find a place to light.

"So I come back here, sure that nobody would recognize me. I laid low for a while and then I looked up Mamie and see that she had a good forty-dollar-a-month job and that her mother had come into some property. I don't see why a girl ain't got a perfect right to help her old father, and I guess I'm entitled to a share in my wife's property. I don't see it no other way."

There was a triumphant note in the old renegade's voice, and there was triumphant insolence in his eyes as he looked at Jerry.

"And after you had browbeaten your own daughter, you went down to Sven Jen-

sen's place to see if you could find some of your old associates," Jerry said. "You didn't find them, so you fawned on Jensen. You tipped him off to what an easy thing it would be to rob the pay-car. I s'pose you've pulled off a stunt like that yourself in your travels."

The man sighed.

"Afore Gregg died me and him and two other men tried it," he said. "But we wa'n't successful. If we had got away with that, I would of been fixed fine for my lifetime. The idea has always been stickin' in my mind. I've mentioned it before and I mentioned it to Jensen. Jensen is the first man I ever got interested in it. It ought to be easy. Gosh dang it! There's the car with the boodle inside it. A few good men could rush the car an' carry off the boodle before the paymaster an' the one or two men with him could wink an eye, them bein' sleepy at the time the attack was made."

"They're planning to rob the car to-night," Jerry said. "Did you know that?"

"I've told you what's been done in the past, but I ain't no prophet," the man sneered.

Jerry turned back to Mamie as a low, dry sob escaped her lips.

"You'd better take me home and then go away where I'll never see you again, Jerry," she said.

"Go away?" Jerry gasped. "Go away and leave you?"

"Why, you won't want to see me after what my father has confessed," Mamie said. "He's a murderer, a robber, a black-mailer. He's everything that's bad, and he glories in it. You can't marry a girl who has a father like that."

"Hell!" said Jerry Donovan.

"Jerry!"

"It's enough to make a man swear," Jerry ground out.

For a moment he stood looking at her and then he strode over to her and swept her into his arms. He kissed her lips with rough ardor.

"You're mine forever and forever," he declared. "Say that: Forever and forever."

"But Jerry—"

"I've had enough beating around the bush. I've had enough nonsense. You're going to marry me in spite of all the crooks in the world. This tanglefoot business has got to stop. Say it!"

The girl looked up into his eyes. They were warm with love for her, and his encircling arms were strong. In fact, Jerry felt as if he were having a renascence of love and strength. Any objection Mamie could raise now would be futile against that love and that strength. He knew she loved him, needed him, and wanted him. He was going to have no more arguments.

"Say it!" he repeated.

His voice was low now, with a lover's pleading note in it, but he still held her close.

Her lids fluttered down. She had a delicious sense of peace and security at a time when she sorely needed that sense.

"Forever and forever," she whispered.

Jerry kissed her again and she kissed him. Jerry released her then and turned to McBride. The two young people, to whom life's best gifts were coming, faced the hardened man at whose back the ghosts of a dark past gibbered.

"What do you expect to do now?" Jerry asked.

"I expect to hang around here and get my piece from Jensen and have Mamie carry out her agreement."

"You'll get nothing from Jensen, for Jensen will be dead or locked up before dawn," Jerry said. "Mamie's agreement is as if she had never made it. She made it only to protect her mother."

Jerry's hand tightened on the girl's.

"Mamie's mother died to-night," Jerry finished.

McBride's face paled. Fright came into his eyes.

"You're lyin'," he said.

"I'm not lying," Jerry said soberly. "I'm telling you the truth. Do you think that, with Mamie standing here at my side, I would lie about a thing like that?"

McBride appeared to pluck up hope. His face hardened.

"Well, I guess Mamie ain't goin' to go back on her old father," he said. "I guess she ain't goin' to see her father go to

prison. An' that's where I'll go if she don't pervide for me and give me her mother's property. Why, if you're goin' to marry her, you ain't aimin' to keep the property that's now hers, are you? There must be about five thousand dollars, all told."

"I'm not aiming to keep it," Jerry said. "It will be Mamie's to do with as she likes. You'll never touch it."

"Then I'll give myself up to the police," McBride threatened.

"Very well," Mamie broke in. "If it has to come to that, it must. I—I can't shield you, even if you are my father."

All the false courage went out of the man. He stood staring at her as if he could not credit his sense of hearing. But she stood across from him, looking at him steadily, her head held up and her eyes shining with determination.

"That's exactly right," Jerry said. "You had your fling. You chose to be a crook rather than an honest man, and now you're due to pay. You can't expect a girl to help you pay. Come with us."

With a strangled cry McBride sprang for the door. He had it half-way open when Jerry seized him by the collar and pulled him back.

"Walk ahead of us," Jerry said. "If you try to run away, I may have to be rough with you."

The man fell in ahead of him and marched along with bent head. Jerry tucked Mamie's hand beneath his arm.

"It isn't a long walk, honey," he said. "We can get to your house quicker than if we waited for a carriage. You want to get home, don't you?"

"Yes," Mamie said, in a strained voice, "I want to get home."

"I'm sorry," Jerry whispered.

"I'll miss my mother," Mamie said simply, "but I know she is resting now. She has suffered a great deal."

They walked in silence for a while and then Mamie suddenly asked:

"What is it about the pay-car, Jerry? Oughtn't you to be where they plan to rob it?"

"I must get over there somehow," Jerry said. "You'll understand if I have to leave you, won't you, honey?"

"Ah, I'll understand," the girl said. "There will be kind neighbors in the house. They have been kind for a long time."

Her tears stopped her. Jerry felt a lump in his own throat.

"You'll be kind to me, Jerry—always?" she said after a while.

"Always," Jerry promised.

"There'll be no more Jungle, no more fighting."

"No more fighting unless it's to help somebody that's weaker than me," Jerry declared.

They neared her house with McBride still in front of them. At the gate Mamie looked up at him, her face pale and strained.

"When I said you ought to be over there, I didn't think of the danger, Jerry," she said. "You'll be careful? You'll come back to me?"

"I'll be careful and I'll come back to you," Jerry said.

He stooped and touched her lips with his own and stood and watched her as she went up the walk. Then he wheeled around on McBride.

"You come with me, you dirty hound!" he said. "I'll put you in charge of somebody that 'll see you don't get away."

"A nice way to treat a man when his wife's lyin' in there dead," McBride said.

"Your wife!" Jerry retorted. "The woman whose heart you broke. Come on and shut up."

He took the man to the station, and there he found Curry and Bartholomew. They came hurrying up to him when they caught sight of him through the snow.

"The girl ain't here, Jerry," Curry said. "She ain't been here all night."

"It's all right," Jerry said. "She's at home."

"Well, that's good news," Curry said. "Me an' Bart was worried consid'able. Dayton and his outfit has gone over to Harpersville. They thought mebbe some harm had come to you."

"No harm," Jerry said. "I've got to get over there, Curry. I'm leavin' a friend of mine with you, a most particular friend. It would break my heart if you let him get away from you or if any harm come to him. Will you watch him till I get back?"

You can go into the waiting-room and keep warm."

Curry grinned appreciatively.

"Anybody that's a friend of yours is a friend of mine," he said. "I'll stick to him closer than a brother."

"Bartholomew," Jerry said gravely, "Miss McBride's mother died to-night. She may need a man up there to help out. Will you go up?"

"I'm right sorry," Bartholomew said. "Sure I'll go up there."

He started at once, and Jerry and Curry took McBride to the waiting-room. Just before they went inside Jerry said to Curry:

"You don't happen to throw a pretty good fist, do you?"

"You mean with a pen? Well, rather. I can make a writin' professor's copy-book look like a hen had walked over it an' left muddy tracks. Why?"

"I've got to have a pass," Jerry said. "I've got to flag No. 8 here and get on board her. She's got to stop to let me off at Harpersville."

"If I'm arrested for forgery, you won't testify against me, will you, Jerry?"

"After to-night," said Jerry, "this railroad will owe us things. I expect that the president of the road will want that pass so he can have it framed."

"You get me paper and pen and ink and leave it to me," Curry said.

They stepped into the waiting-room, and Jerry told the operator about the death of Mamie's mother. The operator had been dozing in his chair. He expressed his sympathy, said he was in good shape to work, and went back to sleep again.

There was pen and ink and paper on the window-ledge, and Jerry carried them over to Curry. Curry made out a pass for Jerry in the name of the division superintendent, filling in the telegraphic signals properly under Jerry's guidance.

"That fast train is due in ten minutes," Curry said. "You've got to swipe that operator's lantern."

Jerry restored the writing material to the window-ledge and stood looking in at the sleeping operator. On the floor near the door there was a lighted, red lantern. Jerry walked to the door and found it open. The

operator was not so cautious about keeping it closed as Mamie had to be.

Slowly and carefully Jerry pushed the door ajar. He reached in and picked up the lantern. The operator did not stir.

With a wave of his hand to Curry, who was sitting beside McBride on one of the benches, Jerry went out on the platform. He held the lantern so that the operator could not see it if he should suddenly waken, and went to the end of the platform. He stood there till he heard the whistle of the fast train. Then he stepped down on the track and began to swing the lantern at his knees.

The engine whistle screeched a reply and Jerry set the lantern on the platform and stepped up beside it. The train slid to a stop and Jerry clambered on board. The operator awoke with a start and peered from the window. The conductor came running, saw Jerry climbing up, and swung his lantern at the engineer. The train pulled out.

"What're you stopping us in this snow for, Donovan?" the conductor asked. "We'll be late getting in as it is."

"I give it up," Jerry answered cheerfully. "All I know is that they called me just as I was going to bed and told me to hustle over to Harpersville."

This fast train received no orders except when it was running late, and the conductor had no means of knowing whether wires were down or not.

"Wires down, I suppose," he said. "You'll have a nice job on your hands. Your pass is not good on this train. What you got in the way of credentials?"

Jerry handed him the forged pass. He just glanced at it and strolled back along the aisle.

Jerry had a seat to himself, and he took out his gun and examined it and made sure his box of ammunition was in his pocket. Then he leaned his head on the plush back of the seat, closed his eyes, and went to sleep. The conductor would be sure he was awake and ready to hop down before they got to Harpersville.

His sleep was profound. He thought he had just closed his eyes when he was roused by some one shaking his shoulder. He

opened his eyes and looked up. The conductor was at his side.

"The next station we stop at is Harpersville," the conductor said, "and I want all the linemen on board to get out on the platform, and be prepared to step down quick. We're not going to come to a dead stop. You can hop off without breaking your neck, can't you?"

"I can try," Jerry said.

He rose and stretched himself and looked at his watch. It marked ten minutes past eleven. He had plenty of time. While he had been sleeping the fast train had passed the slower one, which bore Dayton and his men. Neither Jensen nor the robbers, who were trying to double-cross him, could have arrived.

When the train slowed up at the Harpersville station, he jumped down and stood on the platform while the train passed him. There was no light in the telegraph office, and Jerry remembered now that there was no night operator there.

He looked along the track to the siding. He saw the lights of the pay-car there, burning dimly. The car's occupants were doubtless asleep.

Jerry stepped from the platform and walked across the tracks to a road which ran alongside them. As he came opposite the pay-car, he saw that there was half a dozen freight-cars beyond it. He examined these and found that all of them were loaded except one. This car was the second from the pay-car. Jerry pushed the door back and climbed inside.

He realized that it had grown colder as the night had advanced. The box car was dark and the wind whistled about it. Jerry walked up and down to keep warm.

In thirty minutes he heard the passenger-train on which Dayton would arrive whistle for the station. The train stopped out there. It was, of course, between Jerry and the station, and he could not see who alighted. He left the car and walked around the pay-car. Four figures were moving toward him through the snow.

As they neared him he recognized Dayton as one of them, and he called to him softly. Dayton hurried over to him. Jerry explained his being there.

"I don't know about Jensen," Dayton said, "but that other crew will be here in a few minutes on the other railroad. It'll take 'em ten minutes to walk over here. They're foxy, not travelin' on our road. I had a hunch that they would try that trick, and I had a man over at the next station this side of our village, and he saw them get on board. He wired me."

"There's a box-car over here that we can wait in, Jim," Jerry said. "We'll let 'em almost get into the car before we nail 'em. I wish Jensen and his gang would show up. I want to get all of them in one net."

They got into the box car and stood at the far, dark end of it.

"What became of Mamie?" Dayton whispered.

Jerry told him of Mrs. McBride's death, and of his taking McBride prisoner.

"Well, that's too bad," Dayton said soberly.

"How does that dovetail with your recognizing that fellow, Pat?" Jerry asked.

There was no answer from Pat. He was standing just beside Jerry, and Jerry turned about to look at him.

But in that darkness he could not see Pat's face. For a moment longer, the section foreman maintained his silence.

"Where is this McBride now, Jerry?" he asked then.

"Curry has him in the waiting-room at home," Jerry answered.

"Goin' to keep him there till we get back?" Pat asked.

"Yes."

"I'll take a look at him then," Pat said. "I'll just take a look at him then."

"Hush!" Dayton whispered.

CHAPTER XIV.

SETTLEMENT.

A SILENCE so complete that they could not even hear each other breathe at once enveloped them. Dayton had heard a slight sound at the car door, and it was repeated while all of them listened. It was like the scraping of a body against the edge of the car floor. Then the body came into view dimly. A man climbed into the car.

He was immediately followed by two other men.

The group at the end of the car, listening and waiting in the darkness, drew their revolvers. Jerry was afraid that there would be a clash before the men started to rob the pay-car. That was the last thing he wanted. He must catch them in the act of robbery.

But the three men stood just inside the door. They, too, were listening, watching and waiting.

Suddenly one of them chuckled. It was the marble-faced man who had defied Jensen in the club.

"Ain't that Swede the dumbest thing that ever reared up on two hind legs?" he asked in a low voice. "He didn't think we'd be takin' that train, did he? And him and his two misfits come blunderin' onto the train without lookin' to see who was aboard. I guess I wasn't wise to keep you fellows back till the train was startin', and then hop on and see just who there was among our fellow passengers that we'd be int'rested in. Hell, I don't see how some of these apes lives. I do know where they keep their brains."

"An' it was a good idea to hop down before the train stopped and skip over here," one of the other men said. "But we want to keep our eyes peeled. We want to lay them three out before they begin makin' a noise at the pay-car door. The paymaster and whoever is with him in that car will shoot at the first sign of any trouble."

"We'll descend on 'em sudden as they come up to the car," the other said. "Each pick a man and clout him good with the butt of a gun. Then we got to use the maul on the door and batter it down before a man can open an eye and cock an ear. Where'd you put that maul?"

"It's right here under the door," the third man said.

"Easy there!"

The men at the end of the car saw him lean out of the door. Then he stooped and sprang lithely to the ground. The others followed him.

"Come on," Jerry whispered.

They tiptoed to the door. Peering out,

Jerry saw the three men running alongside the pay-car through the snow.

Jerry jumped down and the others followed him. They hugged the box car till they came to the end of it. Then ahead of them Jerry saw three men lying on the ground. Two other men were bending over them going through their pockets.

"I guess our friend Jensen will have a sore head in the morning," Jerry said. "That gang is saving us some trouble."

They waited for a minute and then the men stood up from those whom they had struck down. They disappeared around the end of the pay-car.

"Now's the time," Jerry whispered. "Take 'em by surprise."

They ran along the car. As they came to the rear platform there was the sound of a heavy blow. One of the men raised the maul for a second blow. The railroad men covered the three with their revolvers.

"Hands up!" Jerry called. "We've got you covered. 'You'—to the man who seemed to be the leader—"we've got a couple of guns on you. Up with 'em quick!"

Doubtless this was not a new experience for the three men on the platform. They wheeled, and their guns came up. Three reports came together. One of Dayton's men fell, but he dragged himself around to the side of the car and sat up.

"Never mind me," he called. "It's only a bullet in my leg. I got it as I jumped back. Go to it, boys."

Simultaneously with the firing of the three shots, the men had jumped from the platform of the pay-car and had begun to run along the track beyond the car.

Jerry comprehended that they had schooled themselves to meet emergencies like these. They would fire once in the hope of killing, maiming or at least confusing their foes, and then they would flee.

The railroad men stepped out on the track and began firing. One of the fleeing men dropped. When Jerry and the others reached him he was lying across the track with his face upturned to the falling snow. Pay-cars would hold no interest for him any more.

The two other men did not stop to see

what had happened to their companion. They wheeled long enough to send bullets flying in the direction of the others, but the bullets went wild.

Then a surprising thing happened.

A man stepped out of the shadow along the track and thrust forward a hand holding a revolver. Jerry uttered a moan of disgust. He supposed that somehow or other one of the company's detectives had got wind of the intended robbery and had arrived on the scene in time to capture one and possibly two of the robbers.

Jerry heard the man call loudly to the other two to hold up their hands. But the men did not obey. There was a flash from the gun of the tallest of the men. But the newcomer did not fall. Instead, his own gun flashed. The tall man threw up his hands, his knees collapsed, and he pitched forward on his face.

The second of the would-be robbers disappeared into the shadows out of which the interrupting figure had come.

"Damn you, whoever you are," Jerry breathed; "you've spoiled my game."

Still supposing the man down there was a company detective, he began to run toward him. As he neared the man, he saw that he had turned and was facing toward him. He held his gun in his hand.

There was a tenseness in the man's attitude that warned Jerry. He acted like a man at bay more than like a detective who had aided in thwarting a robbery.

The man shifted on his feet and leaned forward, staring at Jerry.

"Ah," Jerry breathed to himself, as understanding came to him.

He had recognized Sven Jensen. He understood the situation now. Jensen had broken with the professional robbers. He had recruited new assistants and had come here to give battle to the robbers and then to rob the car. But he had not had nerve enough to make the first move. He had sent his assistants ahead of him. They had not known that three desperate men were planning to rob the car at this hour.

With his revolver in his hand, Jerry stepped into the darkness which the box cars made. He slipped along in this darkness till he was almost opposite Jensen.

He could easily shoot Jensen from where he stood. The Swede was staring at the spot at which Jerry had disappeared. But Jerry had no lust to slay now. He thought of Mamie in the instant he stood there, and he knew he did not want to go back to her with blood on his hands unless he had to shoot Jensen to save his own life.

Somehow, for his girl's sake, he stood completely within the circle of the law. The passion that had ruled him in the past seemed a bleak and futile thing. He calmly decided to make Sven Jensen a prisoner if the thing could be accomplished.

"Jensen," he called out, "throw up your hands. I don't want to shoot you. I won't shoot you unless I have to. But I've got you covered."

The last word was no sooner out of his mouth than Jensen raised his hand with the gun in it. But he did not at once fire. Jerry could see that the hand was shaking. Then he remembered that Jensen thought he was dead.

"It's I, Jerry Donovan," he said.

"You liar!"

The words trembled from Jensen's lips. He pressed the trigger of his revolver and a bullet buried itself in the car above Jerry's head. Jensen's hand dropped to his side. He ran his other hand over his forehead, as if his sight had blurred.

Jerry sprang from his concealment and ran straight toward the saloon-keeper. Jensen shrank back. He seemed bewildered, unable to think.

A dozen leaps brought Jerry in front of him. Jensen recovered himself a little when he realized that his capture was imminent. His gun-hand was raised as far as his hip. But Jerry struck him sharply on the forearm with his clenched fist and the revolver dropped from Jensen's fingers.

Jerry put his revolver against Jensen's breast, pressing on the butt of it so that the muzzle was sunk in Jensen's fat for half an inch.

"You're done, Jensen," Jerry said. "I could have killed you any time in the last few minutes, but I let you live. You can keep right on livin' if you don't move a hand. If you show fight, I'll have to shoot you. What do you say?"

Jensen swallowed hard and wiped sweat from his forehead. His eyes roved from side to side.

"I ain't got nothin' to say," he said. "What do you want of me?"

"Turn around."

Jensen obeyed. His eyes still roved. He hoped a chance to escape would present itself. He thought he would be calmer in a few minutes. The sudden appearance of this "dead man" had unnerved him.

"March along to the car," Jerry ordered.

Again Jensen had to obey. When they reached the car, Dayton looked at Jensen.

"Well, you took him alive, did you, Jerry?" Dayton said. "And you had all the chance in the world to make a sieve of him. Oh, me, another good man gone soft."

"I took him alive," Jerry said simply. "He can have his chance before a jury for all of me. But I wish you'd turn him over to one of your men and have him taken out of my sight. I wish to God I never had to look at his face again."

Dayton placed one of his men on guard over Jensen.

Then a window in the pay-car was thrown up. The face of the paymaster appeared, and he shoved his arm outside. His hand held a gun that shone in the light from the car.

"Throw up your hands, you fellows," he cried.

Dayton chuckled.

"Gosh," he whispered, "look at the way ol' sideburns would foil a gang of robbers. Wouldn't he be a shinin' mark for us if we was hold-up men?"

He raised his voice, and, in a tone which held all due deference, he said to the paymaster: "Don't you shoot me, Mr. Clayton. If you do, this here railroad will lose one of its best conductors. It's me, Jim Dayton. You got my wages in that car some place, and I don't want you to kill me till I have a chance to spend the money."

"Jerry Donovan and some of the rest of the boys are with me. We've just put the kibosh on a bunch of gents that wanted to steal my salary along with the salaries of a few other old and young rails."

"If you don't believe what I'm tellin' you, you can get dressed and come out and

investigate. But don't come out in that night-shirt you got on. It's mighty cold and snowy for a man with bare laigs."

"You've got them all, Dayton?" Clayton asked.

"All but one," Dayton answered, "and by the time you get dressed he'll be so far away you'll never catch him."

The paymaster withdrew his head, and Dayton turned to Jerry.

"What's the program now, Jerry?" he asked.

"Somebody better look at those fellows in Jensen's bunch," Jerry said. "They'll be stirrin' before long. Pat and I will bring up the fellow Jensen shot."

The dead robber lay on the tracks, and Jerry and Pat picked him up and carried him back to the pay-car. They put him down in the light, and Jerry looked at his face. He was the leader of the three. His face was like marble still, but white marble now, as cold as ice. They then brought up the man who had been killed first and placed him beside his former leader.

Clayton had dressed by now, and he and his assistant and the porter came out of the car.

"Well, Donovan," Clayton said, "you've had quite a busy evening, haven't you? I heard you were fired. How did you get in on this thing?"

"I was fired," Jerry said. "Dayton and me happened to learn about this matter."

"Jerry learned about it," Dayton corrected. "He let us in, knowin' that things was pretty dull and we would enjoy an evening out."

"Now, I tell you what you do, Mr. Clayton. You go into your palatial private car and make out a report on this here business. Take me in with you and let me give you the details. Jerry would be too modest to tell them to you straight. Then you let me take the report and file it at the first station we hit. I want to see that the boss knows what's what. The next time they get a young pencil-pusher for a superintendent of telegraph maybe he'll look over his men before he fires the best he's got."

"Oh, all right," Clayton said.

He led Dayton into the car.

The men in Jensen's gang had begun to

stir and the others got them to their feet. They were dazed and baffled for a few minutes. They had been about to rob a pay-car and then darkness had descended upon them. They were emerging from that darkness to find themselves confronted by hard-faced men with revolvers in their hands. "Where's Sven?" one of them asked.

"Aw, shut up," another growled.

"Shut up yourself. Where's Jensen, you fellows?"

"He's around somewhere," Jerry said.

"Nabbed?"

"Just like yourselves."

"What happened to us?"

"Jensen had hired some other men to pull off this robbery," Jerry said. "They wanted too much of what the pay-car was to yield, and then he hired you."

"That's why the skunk sent us down here ahead of him, while he stayed on watch," the man said. "I wish he'd got a bullet. What're you going to do with us, neighbor?"

"We'll see in a minute," Jerry answered. "Go through them, boys, and see what we can add to our little collection of firearms."

While the men were doing that Jerry thought belatedly of Dayton's man who had been hurt.

"Where's Tim Mather?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm right here," said Tim from the side of the car. "Don't fuss about me. When you got everything else 'tended to, you can help me into the car. I'm kind of cold, but the hurt I got don't amount to nothin'."

Dayton appeared on the platform.

"Come and give me a lift with Tim," Jerry called. "He's cold."

Dayton came down, and he and Jerry carried Tim into the pay-car. Dayton looked at the wound, examining it with the quick gentleness of a woman.

"Don't amount to much, Tim," he said. "We'll wash it up in a minute and put a rag on it like your mother used to do when you cut your finger. Huh?"

"In the mean time you can give me a chew of tobacco," Tim said.

Dayton complied with that often-made request, and turned to Jerry.

"Mr. Clayton wants you to flag the first

train that comes along," Dayton said. "He wants to move out of here. He don't seem to like the locality. I don't know whether it's the scenery or the climate he objects to, but he wants to move."

"Let's have a lantern, then," Jerry said.

He went back to the track, while the astute Dayton waited in the warm car.

In half an hour a light appeared in the east. An engine with a snow-plow bulked itself out of the gloom. It swept past them, leaving a clear track.

Fifteen minutes later another head-light appeared down the track. Jerry flagged the train and found it to be a fast freight. He explained to the engineer what was wanted, and the engineer pulled down so that the pay-car could be poled out on the main track and coupled to the caboose.

The freight-train had to stop at the next station, and Jerry and Pat left the train there. In an hour there would be a passenger-train back to Wellsville. Jerry wanted to get back there, so that he could see Mamie in the morning. She would have need of him.

"I'll just file Clayton's report," Dayton said. "Mebbe they'll phone it to the super before mornin'."

He and Jerry went into the telegraph office. Dayton filed the report.

"Will you have the operator at Wellsville station tell Curry that I'm all right and on my way home?" Jerry asked the operator. "Tell Curry to get word to Miss McBride if he can."

"Sure, Jerry," the operator said, and he did that before he sent Clayton's report.

"You'll take care of those dead men, and Jensen and the rest, will you, Dayton?" Jerry asked.

"Don't think a thing more about it," said Dayton. "You got enough to think about, Jerry. You tell Mamie I'm sorry, mighty sorry."

"I will," Jerry promised.

Dayton started for the door to return to the train. He hesitated for a moment, and then he faced about and held out his hand to Jerry. It seemed a hard thing for him to do, but he blurted out:

"You're all right, son, and I hope you'll be so happy you'll bust."

Jerry smiled and gripped the hand.

The freight-train pulled out after another train, westbound, had passed the station, and in less than an hour Jerry and Pat caught the passenger-train back home.

They were tired and they slept all the way.

"Where is this McBride?" Pat asked, as they stepped down on the platform.

"In the waiting-room," Jerry said, "unless he has given Curry the slip."

"He would have as much chance of givin' Curry the slip as he would have of givin' a steel-trap the slip," Pat said.

"Think you'll know him after all these years, Pat?" Jerry asked.

"I'll just have a look at him," Pat said.

Something in the section-foreman's tone stirred Jerry's interest. He led him to the waiting-room. Curry and his prisoner were still sitting on the bench. Curry rose, yawning.

"I've had an excitin' night," he said. "The operator was just tellin' me about Clayton's report that went over the wire. Quite a fuss, eh, Jerry? I wish I'd been there. I deserve a credit-mark for staying here with this poor fish all these hours."

"I'm grateful to you, Curry," Jerry said.

He glanced at Pat. Pat was staring at the little man on the bench. He walked up to the man and stood before him.

"Don't you remember me?" Pat asked.

"Never saw you before," the man grunted, his eyes averted.

"Didn't know me at all when you had that fuss and killed a man years ago?"

"Never saw you before."

"Well, I'm Pat Lavin that has worked on the section here, man and boy, for more years than Jerry Donovan is old. I knew the minute I laid eyes on you that I had knowed you in them old days, but to save me I couldn't put my finger on you. But I got it on you now."

"It's McBride, isn't it, Pat?" Jerry asked. "It's Mamie's father."

"Mamie's father, me foot," said Pat.

"McBride, me other eye. That man is Andy Gregg, that was a boon companion of McBride's, got into that fuss with McBride and run away with him. Yes, sir, that is Andy Gregg. Now that me memory has

been jingled a little, I'd know him in a million or two."

CHAPTER XV.

THE BEGINNING.

THERE was a wedding at Mamie McBride's home three weeks later. Among those present were the superintendent of telegraph and the division superintendent.

The superintendent of telegraph had discharged Jerry when Jerry was only a line-man; but before the ceremony he called Jerry aside and said:

"I've got a little wedding present for you, Donovan. I've been investigating your case since the attempt to rob the pay-car, and I find that you were ill that day I watched you work, and that you hadn't touched a drop the night before. Why didn't you tell me you were ill, man?"

"Anyhow, you're to be chief lineman. The chief has quit. If you want the job you can have it."

"I want it," said Jerry.

"She was the prettiest bride ever I see," said Curry to Dayton. "And Jerry certinly looked like he was all man."

"I would bet that a prettier girl than Mamie never took the high dive before," said Dayton.

"It was a nice piece of work for Pat to put a tag on that damned skunk, Andy Gregg," Curry said.

"Yes, and to-day Andy tells the police all he knows, which ain't such a much. McBride died out West some place the first year him and Andy was out there. Andy was a poor criminal. He lived, an' that was about all. Then he come back here to blackmail McBride's girl. Mamie had practically never seen her father, as far as recollectin' him went, and she fell for his bluff. Of course she couldn't let the damn' horse-thief get to her mother to frighten the mother to death."

As they trudged along through the snow, Curry said, with a satisfied sigh:

"Well, this is the end of it, anyhow."

"The end?" Dayton said scornfully.

"Why, it's only the beginnin', man."

(The End.)



The Log-Book

By the Editor

DO people like to read bright, cheerful love stories? A man I know thinks they do, and is constantly advising an author friend of his to write them instead of cudgeling his brain to evolve some horrible happenings with complicated plot and an outcome which is more likely than not to leave an unpleasant taste in the mouth.

Interested in their discussion, I determined to put the matter up to you readers of *THE ARGOSY* and ask for an expression of opinion. Naturally there must be variety, but there seems to be such a scarcity of tales about the course of true love in these days that I am curious to know whether the public at large is not interested in this sort of thing any more, or if it is merely because editors think they are not.

— * * * —
When Jason sailed in search of the Golden Fleece his fleet was called "The Argosy," his quest the motif for a whole literature of adventure on the high seas. And to stories of the sea and of the men who live on and by it, this magazine has always been particularly hospitable.

"A MAN TO HIS MATE"

BY J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of "Isle of Drums," "The Butterfly Orchid," etc.

is an epic of the deep—a swift, colorful drama of strong lives and bitter hates. "Elemental" is the word for it, hackneyed as usage may have made it: "big," "vital," "gripping"—one can exhaust the adjectives, and still fall short of what is indeed a tremendous canvas of truly Homeric quality.

I like to think that the soul of a Viking was born again in that dynamic body of *Land*, the magnificent; that *Rainey*, too, inherited the iron in his blood; that *Peggy*'s indomitable heart came straight from some Valkyrie's haven of strong souls. It is not too much to say that London at his best never did anything better of its kind than this romance of a double lure. And if you like surprises, the astoundingly dramatic finale will leave you dumb. Beginning February 7, as a four-part serial.

— * * * —
This is the story of a sparrow that turned into a swan—and swans do not sing, as everybody knows—or ought to know.

"THE SONG OF THE SWAN"

BY JAMES HENRY THOMPSON

is that rare blend of interest and appeal: a "human document," the dramatic and moving history of a child of the slums, whose philosophy, at least in the beginning,

was the primitive philosophy of an elemental savage—a savage of the streets. This is the story of *Polly Morgan*, philosopher, opportunist, cynic, *gamin*, *apache*, and of the miracle which, at a stroke, blended all these in one final, harmonious, enduring chord. This is published as a complete novelette in *THE ARGOSY* for February 7.

I think there is nothing more humiliating than the impact of flesh against flesh which takes the form of a blow. In a story called "THE SLAP," by Roy W. Hinds, the far-reaching results of such an insult are vividly portrayed. Also in the next *ARGOSY* you will find another of the delightfully humorous narratives of *Joc Conner*, as related by Raymond J. Brown, this time concerning a branching out of the detective business to take in collecting "AN OUTSTANDIN' ACCOUNT." In the same issue "CHINOOK WINDS," by May Wilmoth, will waft you to Vladivostok and a mystery that begins in a sedan chair and ends in the rear rooms of a Chinese restaurant.

REQUESTED NOT TO TRY TO IMPROVE

North Platte, Nebraska.

We have been constant readers of your wonderful magazine for six years, but this is the first time we have tried to tell you how we enjoy it. We think there is *none* better, and you couldn't possibly improve it, so *please* don't try.

Yours for many more years filled with ARGOSYS.
(THE MISSES) FLORENCE AND LUCILLE BRADY.

A PIPPIN

Lowell, Michigan.

I am just writing a line to let you know that I appreciate a good magazine when I read one, and *THE ARGOSY* is a pippin. It's got them all beat. "Between Worlds" is a great story. Smith has certainly got some imagination. The stories are all good, but there are always some better than others. I like Western stories best, because they have got the pep in them.

Here's luck to *THE ARGOSY*.

JOHN H. ROBERTS, JR.

"OUT IN THE WEST STORIES"

Pickens, Mississippi.

THE ARGOSY is one of the best magazines I have ever read, and I am an ardent reader of it. "The Devil's Riddle" is one of the best serials, along with "Bully Bess" and "Cold Steel." In fact "Cold Steel" is the best serial I ever read in *THE ARGOSY*. George C. Shedd and Rex Parsons are among two of my favorite authors. Am fond of out-in-the-West stories and fiction true to life. Do not care for stories that are too unreal. An old customer. (MRS.) C. M. ANDERSON.

16 MILES IN DEEP SNOW FOR THE ARGOSY

Fort Worth, Texas.

I wish to tell you how much I have enjoyed the good old *ARGOSY*. It's just like an old, long-lost pal. Last winter, when I was alone on my homestead in Colorado, *THE ARGOSY* was always at my side in a chair or on the table or just any old place where I could keep my eye on it so the pack rats did not carry it away. And last summer, when a "locoed bronc" threw me from his

back into the "dry" well, I got mad because some one did not come along soon enough and pull me out. There I was, losing all that good time and not reading.

I once rode sixteen miles horseback down from the mountains to Colorado Springs in deep snow just to get me an *ARGOSY*.

Long live *THE ARGOSY*.

(MISS) MARIE WILSON.

A LONG STORY BY FRANCIS JAMES NOW IN STOCK

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

I enclose herein subscription to *THE ARGOSY*. We have been getting it for the past nine months by hunting for it from store to store. We enjoy its stories immensely, and only came across the magazine by picking it up by accident in a bookstore here. Lately we have been experiencing difficulty in obtaining the proper issues and so would rather be a subscriber. I may add Francis James is my favorite author, so far as I've gone. I wish he would write a good serial. John Frederick and Achmed Abdullah are also very good authors. The best short story I've read so far is "Shelving Father." Particularly I want to mention the excellent spelling in your magazine, which in itself is an indorsement of my appreciation: wholesome reading cultivating high ideals intellectually and morally. Many fail miserably to attain these standards.

Accept my sincerest thanks and best wishes for your success.

WILLIAM M. DUFF.

NO DANGER OF THE ARGOSY TURNING MUSHY

Birmingham, Alabama.

This is my second letter to the Log. Noticed my first one was printed. Hope this one is also, for there are a few *ARGOSY* fans I want to see it. My kick is this: There is too much talk about *THE ARGOSY* not giving enough love stories. Take for example the "Peter the Brazen" series, "The Red Road," and "Lord of Lords Jim" series. Also all of Charles A. Seltzer's Western serials. You will find a neat little love story in each. The old *ARGOSY* has stood up for adventure, romance, and sport for a good many years, and I believe the readers would be mighty disappointed to see

it become mushy with love stories. **THE ARGOSY** would be complete with only these writers: Charles Alden Seltzer, Loring Brent, and Garret Smith, although all the present authors with the good old **Argosy** are extra good.

Now just one last rap at Miss "Argosy Fan" in Log of November 8 issue, knocking our old favorite, Seward W. Hopkins. Evidently she never read "The Hoodoo Ranch" or she would say he was right there with the goods. If you use this please use my full name. An old **Argosy** reader.

J. C. GUNTER.

ECHOES FROM THE PRINTERS' STRIKE

Lisbon, Ohio.

Well, the two sets of kickers have each rung the bell, even kicking in different directions.

How many times I have seen in the Log-Book that so and so wanted the good old **Argosy** to dock semi-weekly in their port, and again, a few fearfully busy persons would rather it glided to the slip once a month. Well, they each have got their wish now, and I hope they are satisfied to have had a chance to try out their pet theories. But oh, at what cost! What an economic blunder that such things must be! Lisbon was without its favorite magazine for four weeks, then we enjoyed one issue in one week, and next week were treated to one week arrears, which gave us two together *that* week.

While awaiting the outcome of the trouble, the reading public were sadly disconsolate, but their discomfort could not be compared to the difficulties which the publishers must have endured, owing to the disorganization of their working force and consequent confusion of plans.

Not voicing it as a selfish or miserly wish, must say that I hope the price and the make-up may still remain the same. If the latter must be changed to conform to the former, please make it conventional, and add a page or two more advertising. To my mind, speaking fraternally, that would balance matters somewhat.

Personally, as to the price, I afford it now, but being a widow, could not spend any more than at present upon reading matter.

I write for several magazines and newspapers, and receive my copies free, and from the money earned from such writing I set aside a certain sum for fiction, and above that I do not go, so hope that I may be allowed still to read the good old **ARGOSY**.

A few words in praise of some of the stories which I have just read: "At the Eleventh Hour," by Grace Lovell Bryan, October 25 issue, is a great, deep story, and I enjoyed it very much. "Derricked," by George L. Catton, was very enjoyable, and ended right. "Whose Gold?" by Frederick R. Bechdolt, was fine, and has much to recommend it. Here's many thanks for mixing 'em right, however you manage it.

SARAH HUTE.

HOW ABOUT THIS, GIRLS?

Altoona, Pennsylvania.

I have been a faithful reader of **THE ARGOSY** for the last three years, but have never seen a letter in the Log-Book from my own town. I am not a subscriber to your magazine, but am always hanging around the news-stand on Thursday for it.

I discovered **THE ARGOSY** in a rather odd man-

ner one night. I was at a sledding party out in the country about fifteen miles. I happened to pick up this magazine, and was looking it over. I found a short story that looked kind of good to me, and I read it. After I got started it took the bunch a good while to pull me away from it.

I asked a young fellow who resided at this farmhouse where he got the magazine, and how long he had been reading it. He told me that he had a news-dealer hold each month's issues until he went into town and got them every month. He told me it was some pastime during the winter evenings when it was too cold to go out. The next day I just naturally dropped into a news-stand and inquired about **THE ARGOSY**. I was told it came in every Thursday, and I promptly told the dealer to hold it for me.

In your issue of October 18, which I have just received, owing to the strike conditions, I read a letter from a boy in Massachusetts who says he has no use for a girl who uses powder and paint. I fervently agree with him there. There are quite a few girls in this town who do the same thing. They really cover up what good looks they have got.

I was standing on a street-corner the other day talking to a boy friend of mine. Two girls were coming toward us. My friend looked at them, then turned to me and grinned, "Holy gee! Mac, look at those two dames. Don't they have the camouflage on good, though?" I had to laugh at him at the way he expressed himself.

He classed the stuff as camouflage. He is right. I often wonder if the girls think they are deceiving the men by "dolling up" that way. If they think so, they are wrong. The men only associate with them because they all use the stuff. If the men would form a union and go on a strike from these girls, they would soon be scraping the thick plaster of rouge off. I ask if the editor agrees with me.

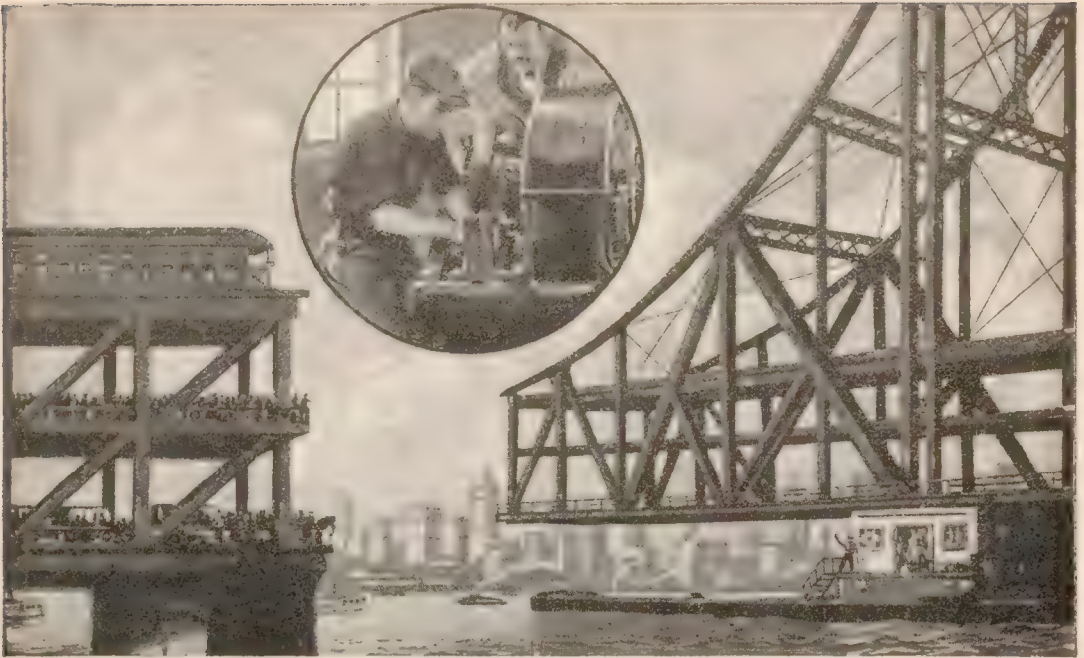
Of course, if the girls didn't use all that kind of dope the people who manufacture it wouldn't be millionaires. I agree with the girls in wanting to help their nation's manufactories, but when it ruins their complexions and their skin, why do it? But, on the other hand, they all do it.

I was going to write about automobiles in this letter, but I changed my mind when I found there are others in the United States who dislike powder and rouge as much as I do. Maybe some of the girl readers will wonder if I am a confirmed woman-hater. I'll tell them that I am not. I appreciate the weaker sex as much as most men do, but when it comes to having a girl who thinks it makes her look nice to have a cake of rouge plastered on her countenance, I am nowhere to be seen. I give myself credit for causing at least two girls to quit using so *much*. They still use it, however, but they don't use a whole lot.

Should this letter escape the waste-basket and get into the good old Log-Book, of which I am as faithful a reader as the stories, I would feel elated. To find that my view concerning "camouflage" gets down out of these mountains would be my delight. I don't think I am the only one in this town, either, who dislikes to see a girl all made up. We like to see it over the foot-lights, because we go there to see the women as they aren't. But when it comes to seeing them on the street—I can't express it in words.

Hoping this will not cause a riot or anything like that, and that I will see it in the Log-Book, I am,

H. D. RETTBURG.



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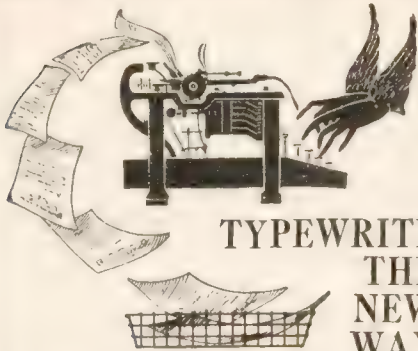
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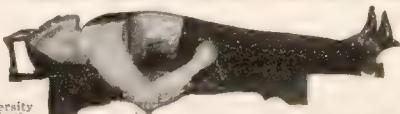
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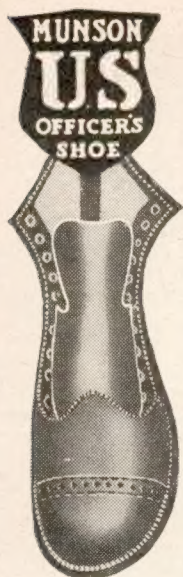
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Classified Advertising continued from page 4, front section.

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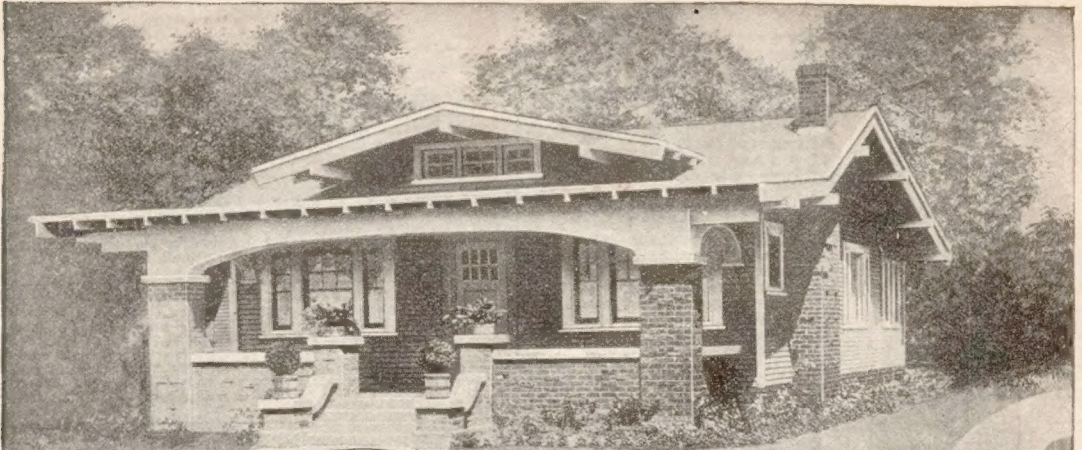
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